▪ World / A6

Desperate side of Diana revealed

▪ Metro / A17

No fare hike, no strike, for now

▪ Sports / A19

SEA Games preparations 'a mess'

▪ Business / B1

February inflation eases to 4 percent

▪ Saturday Special / C1

Norah Jones feels right at home

20 DPWH execs charged in ₱140-M car repair scam

By Armand N. Nocum

TWENTY officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways face possible arrest for plunder in connection with the P139-million vehicle repair scam, which was uncovered in 2002.

The Office of the Ombudsman yesterday

20 DPWH/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Surgery of 8-year-old boy is a miracle in progress

By Cathy Babao Guballa

HE is a miracle in progress.

Kenneth Villa, the 8-year-old boy afflicted with Morquio syndrome, a very rare bone disease characterized by severe malformation of the spine and dwarfing, finally got his much-needed operation at the Philippine

SURGERY/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Saturday, March 6, 2004 ★★ 54 pages / 6 sections / vol. 19 / no. 89 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Erap now in Tanay villa

GMA justifies virtual house arrest 'if it's within the law'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Armand N. Nocum

UNKNOWN to the general public, ousted President Joseph Estrada has moved to his weekend estate in Tanay, Rizal, and is practically enjoying house arrest.

Reliable sources confirmed to the INQUIRER the unusual arrangement for Estrada, who is supposed to be detained at Camp Capinpin in Tanay while undergoing trial for plunder. He was transferred to the military camp from the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City on Oct. 16 last year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo justified the undisclosed arrangement Thursday night, saying it was part of her commitment to Estrada's mass supporters that she would not oppress him. But she stressed that it was not a result of her own decision.

"Well, in 2001 in my State of the Nation Address, I said [that] while the wheels of justice continue [to turn], and they do, I consider it my act of respect to the many in the masses who see in the condition of Estrada a mirror of what they perceive to be their own oppressed condition," Ms Macapagal told INQUIRER chief executives, editors and reporters.

"I [said I] will do what I can within the law to care for his personal circumstances," she said.

Asked if this included permission for Estrada to stay in his own house in Tanay, Ms Macapagal said: "Well, whatever is within the law. You know, that's not me because the prosecution is the Ombudsman, the Sandiganbayan ... I mean, they're all independent of me. And then the custodians are the police, and they get their own permission.

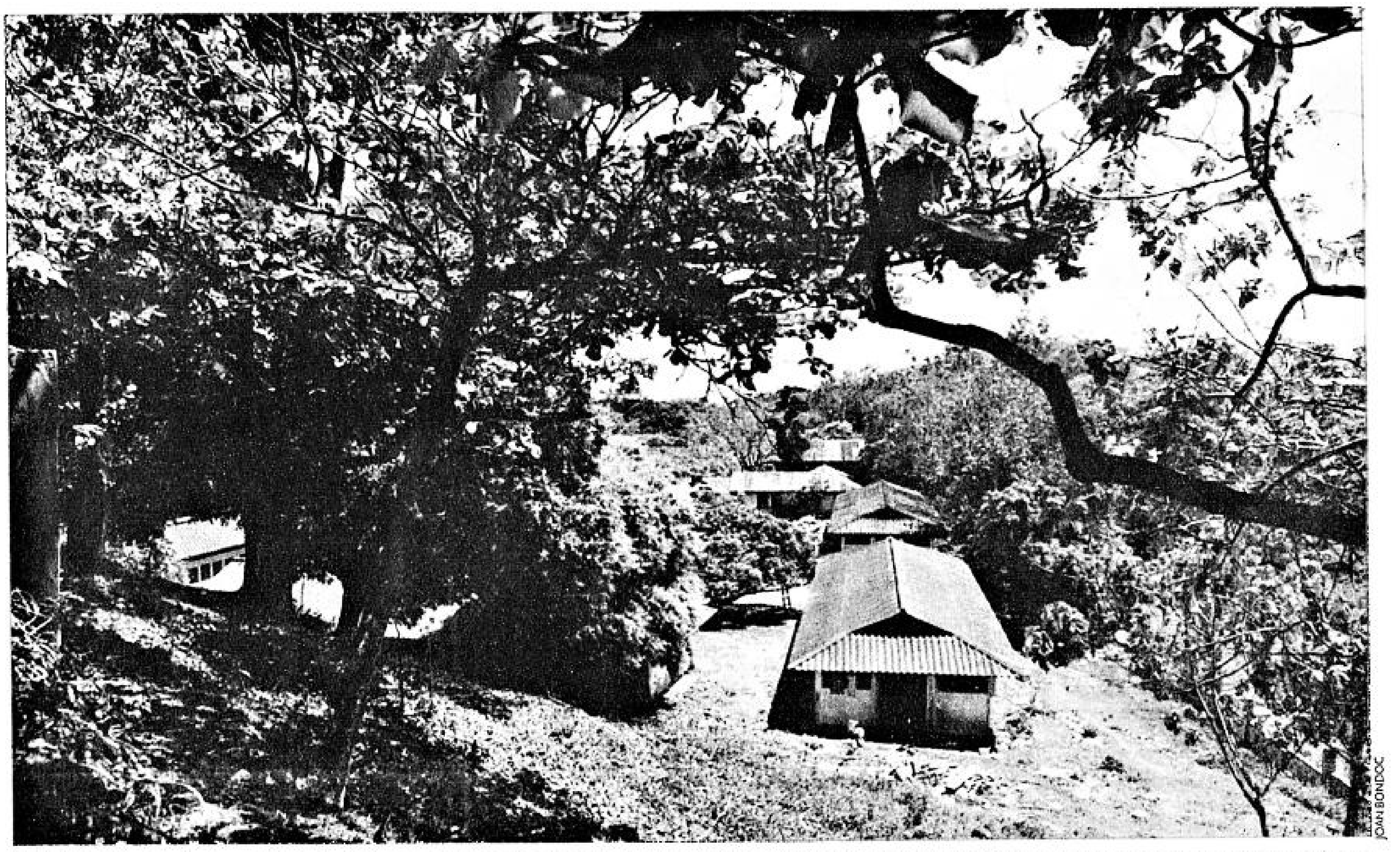
"Whatever are the details, I set my strategic policy in July 2001."

Asked again if Estrada's staying in his rest house was all right, the President said: "Well, to me what is within the law [is all right]. That's a matter for the lawyers to discuss. But to me, that's why I want to give a general principle: what is within the law."

She reiterated that "many of the masses see in him a mirror of their own oppression, so if they see the government oppressing him, they feel even more oppressed."

An INQUIRER source also said, "I think he [Estrada] was allowed to go there [to his

ERAP NOW/ A8



JOAN BONDOC

THE ESTRADA estate (only a partial view), which was recently renovated, sprawls on 15 hectares with a swimming pool and a warehouse converted into a private chapel. The main house was once described as a Mediterranean-style villa. It is across the street from Camp Capinpin in Tanay where the ex-President is ostensibly detained while undergoing trial for plunder.

FPJ major handicap is Estrada, says pollster

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Minerva Generalao

IF FERNANDO Poe Jr. is having a hard time convincing people that he is fit for the presidency, he should blame his "Pareng Erap," ousted President Joseph Estrada.

This view was aired yesterday by Pulse Asia Inc. research director Felipe Miranda, who also said the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino was reaping the effects of Estrada's fall from power.

"Poe's major handicap is there was an Estrada before him," Miranda said at a forum sponsored by the nongovernment organization Kilosbayan at the Lyceum University.

If it were not for Estrada, Miranda said, "Poe would have broken away" from the pack of presidential candidates.

"No one is breaking away at this point," said Miranda, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines.

In an interview on Feb. 26 with the INQUIRER, Miranda said the "weakness" of Poe's campaign was that it was "a post-Estrada campaign."

He said that at about this time in the 1998 campaign for the presidency, Estrada was already hitting 40 percent of the voters, or higher. But this was because "there was no Erap before Erap," he said.

Miranda said people could not help

FPJ BIGGEST/ A8

Davide still clueless on next justice

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Philip C. Tubeza

SO IS she or isn't she? Going to the Supreme Court, that is.

The controversial appointment of Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Minita Chico Nazario to the country's highest court continues to be surrounded by confusion, even after both the President and the Chief Justice spoke on the issue on consecutive days.

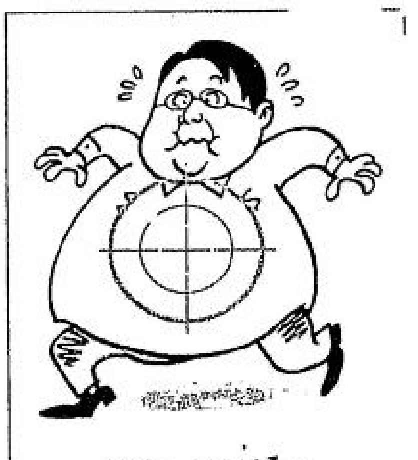
On Thursday night, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she had merely deferred Nazario's nomination, pending the resolution of the plunder case against deposed President Joseph Estrada, which is being heard in her court.

"There was a clamor for her to finish some of the aspects of the Estrada case and we both agreed that she would attend to these things first. Her appointment has not been withdrawn," Ms Macapagal said in an exclusive interview with the INQUIRER.

But Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. said yesterday his office had yet to receive any appointment papers, despite the lapse of the constitutionally-mandated 90-day period for the President to fill up the vacancy.

"The Office of the Chief Justice has not received any appointment from Malacañang. I am not even aware of any appointment because I have not seen (one). Nothing was transmitted to us," Davide

DAVIDE/ A4



Big Mike big target

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

IT'S PROBABLY his voice, or the way he parts his hair, or it could very well be his size.

Whatever. But the First Gentleman has become an easy target for President Macapagal-Arroyo's "opponents and destabilizers."

For this reason, the couple have decided to make Mike "invisible." Meaning, we're not going to hear or see a strand of his hair, at least for the duration of the President's reelection campaign.

"It was a mutual decision because my husband is a favorite whipping boy of everybody. He's a target of all my opponents and destabilizers," said Ms Macapagal in a candid discussion with the INQUIRER editorial and management team Thursday night.

While the First Gentleman may

BIG MIKE/ A8

JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

PDI HOSTS DINNER FOR GMA

INQUIRER Chair Marixi Prieto (right) and president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez welcome President Macapagal when she came to dinner Thursday to shoot the breeze with the paper's executives and editors.

Explain Comelec appointments, SC orders Palace

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has ordered Malacañang to explain the appointments of new election commissioners Virgilio Garcillano and Manuel Barcelona Jr., whom the opposition accused of being "at the mercy" of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

It also ordered the two new members of the Commission on Elections to comment on the opposition's petition asking the high court to nullify their appointments.

In an en banc resolution last Tuesday, the high court gave Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and the two commissioners 10 days to explain their side.

"Acting on the special action for certiorari and prohibition with prayer for a writ of preliminary injunction or temporary restraining order, the court resolved, without giving due course to the petition, to require the respondents to comment thereon within

EXPLAIN/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with rains. Southern Visayas and Mindanao will be mostly cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms while the rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/06/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second **FRONTPAGE**

Voters ignore Church on population

By Volt Contreras

PRO-"FREE choice" candidates enjoy the support of an increasing number of Filipino voters who want to know their stand on the population issue.

This is according to a recent Pulse Asia survey that found more and more voters are now open to electing a candidate who would let couples enjoy a "free choice" of family planning methods—a move most unwelcome to the influential Roman Catholic Church that prescribes only the "natural" way for its flock.

Predominantly Catholic, the country's population is hitting 82.6 million this year and 84.2 million next year, based on National Statistics Office projections. An annual growth rate of 2.36 percent adds 1.6 million to 2 million babies to the figures each year.

Between 82 and 86 percent of Filipinos would vote for candidates who are pro-choice, or will approve laws on population and government-funded programs on family planning and women's health, the poll said. Only 2 to 3 percent say such candidates should be rejected, while 12 to 15 percent were undecided on the matter, Pulse Asia reported in its February 2004 Ulat Ng Bayan.

One in two Filipinos (50 percent) thinks a candidate's support for family planning will determine one's victory, while four in 10 (41 percent) say it's hardly a factor. Only 8 percent believe that supporting family planning spells defeat for a candidate.

The survey was conducted nationwide from Feb. 16 to 20, covering 1,800 respondents 18 years old and above. It has an error margin of plus or minus 2.3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

In a similar Pulse Asia survey in December 2000, 69 percent supported pro-"free choice" candidates, while 71 percent backed candidates who would craft population laws or measures. The survey noted that Filipinos who prefer such candidates have considerably increased in the past four years.

Reacting to the survey, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye reiterated President Macapagal-Arroyo's population policy as one based on responsible parenthood. "The President is for birth spacing as a means of controlling the population through an informed citizenry, resulting in fewer births, " he said.

Sen. Tito Sotto, Poe's campaign manager said Poe is also a responsible parenthood advocate, believing that the number of children one must have should depend on how well they can afford to support them. "He is also not comfortable with anything that promotes artificial means of family planning," Sotto added.

Alyansa ng Pag-Asa's Raul Roco, on the other hand, said he is fully supportive of population "management," adding that the government has the duty to ensure that the nation's resources are commensurate to the rate of population growth to ensure sustainable development.

"Population management should be guided by the principle of sustainable development," he said.

Evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva said that he is for freedom of choice although he rejects abortion as a choice. He said the Filipino family should be the basis for any political or economic program of change.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, on the other hand, has said that he could risk incurring the ire of the Catholic Church for airing his stand on family planning, which is that if couples maintain two children from now until 2008, "we can start a zero population growth rate."

Yesterday, reproductive health advocates urged presidential aspirants not to cower before the Catholic Church in crafting their population management measures even as the country's bishops reiterated their support for "pro-life candidates."

"There is no need to be afraid of the Catholic Church because people will vote according to their choice," said Former Health Secretary Alberto Romualdez, president of Friendly Care Foundation. *With reports from Blanche S. Rivera, Michael L. Ubac, Christine O. Avendaño, Norman Bordadora*

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

FPJ still refuses to face rivals in public debates

By Christine O. Avendaño

ORMOC CITY—He may have hurdled a major legal battle giving him the go-signal to run for the presidency.

But Fernando Poe Jr., is not yet about to succumb to appeals by his rivals to engage them in public debates.

Presidential aspirant Raul Roco had earlier called for Poe to face his rivals in a debate. Now that the Surpreme Court has decided that he can run for the country's top post, the Alyansa ng Pag-asa standard bearer said people would want to know whether Poe is qualified to be president through a public debate.

Poe's personal campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, yesterday insisted that Poe has been reaching out to the people anyway, and informing them about his ideas on running the government on the campaign trail.

Sotto said the opposition bet expresses his ideas and platform in the form of, "*pagkukuwento niya sa tao pag nagsasalita siya*," he added (He explains his platform by way of stories he relates in his campaign sorties). His approach is totally different from the usual campaign speeches of politicians, Sotto added.

The senator reiterated that the standard bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino has not changed his stand on his aversion to participating in public debates.

"FPJ has always said that debates are divisive," Sotto told reporters. Poe, he said, continues to feel that public debates have not been of much help as seen in the past since "no one has benefited from these."

Poe camp has lost faith in polling firms, says Sotto

By Christine O. Avendaño

ORMOC CITY—The opposition has lost its faith in polling firms and has ditched them altogether, including the Social Weather Stations headed by Mahar Mangahas, a first cousin of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s.

Instead, the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino has started using a new polling system which gets "feedback" on its candidates and issues every two days, Sen. Vicente Sotto III said yesterday.

The senator told reporters here that the KNP cannot divulge anything more about the new system, but bragged that their survey is "closer to reality" and has already been used in the US.

The decision to use a new polling system came after the KNP "found out that people in the field had been approached by personalities who are close to some political groups."

Sotto said: "We felt that the surveys were no longer credible when we started hearing that survey groups were using the same people."

The senator was referring to Pulse Asia and the Social Weather Stations.

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Explain Comelec appointments, Supreme Court orders Palace

From page A1

10 days from notice thereof," the tribunal said.

The SC issued the order after two opposition-linked lawyers asked the court on Feb. 24 to nullify Garcillano and Barcelona's appointments.

In a 25-page petition, lawyers Agripino C. Baybay III and Paulino Ungos III urged the tribunal to unseat Garcillano and Barcelona, because their ad interim or temporary appointments were allegedly "legally and constitutionally defective."

"President (Macapagal) Arroyo has, by issuing ad interim appointments, put in place commissioners of the Comelec who will be at her mercy, pleading for a permanent appointment," the petition said.

"Commissioners with temporary appointments are not expected to be impartial; they are in the meantime, temporary and in danger of being replaced anytime, and would do anything at the bidding of the appointing authority," it added.

Heavy criticism

The petitioners also asked the tribunal to issue a temporary restraining order while it hears the case. Demaree Raval, a lawyer of Sen. Edgardo Angara, accompanied them when they filed the petition before the high court.

The President appointed Garcillano and Barcelona to the poll body to replace commissioners Luzviminda Tancangco and Ralph Lantion, whose terms expired on Feb. 2.

But the appointments came under heavy criticism after Garcillano was accused of involvement in election irregularities in Mindanao while Barcelona was described as allegedly close to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo; he is also reported to have contributed to Ms Macapagal's vice presidential campaign in the 1998 elections.

"To allow (the appointees) to discharge their functions despite the lingering question on the validity of their appointments, coupled with (the) widespread and commonly held perception that they are politically indebted to President (Macapagal) Arroyo, who is herself a presidential candidate, may result in the erosion of the credibility of the Comelec, thereby casting doubts on the regularity of the elections that it will administer," the petitioners said.

They noted that Garcillano and Barcelona submitted separate comments to the SC supporting the disqualification case against opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. although they did not participate in deliberations that led the Comelec to dismiss the case initially.

"It betrays the eagerness of Garcillano and Barcelona to please the appointing power who is running for president," they said.

Obvious maneuver

The petitioners also said that the President knew fully well that her two appointees would not be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA) since she appointed them on Feb. 7, or a day after Congress adjourned.

"President (Macapagal) Arroyo exercised her appointing authority with the obvious effort to thwart the constitutionally enshrined check and balance of submitting her appointments for confirmation by the Commission on Appointments. The manner and timing of the issuance of their appointments were resorted to as a way of sidestepping the CA in the appointment process," they said.

The petitioners noted that the CA will not be able to scrutinize the appointments since Congress resumes session on May 24 for the "exclusive purpose of convening as a presidential Board of Canvassers."

"It is clear, therefore, that she intended the appointments to be merely temporary, and to last only until June 11, 2004 when the appointments will lapse (after Congress adjourns)," they said.

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Surgery of 8-year-old boy . . .

From page A1

General Hospital.

The disease is an inherited genetic disorder.. There are only 250 known Morquio syndrome cases worldwide and only three in the Philippines.

Ken, whose story was first publicized in the INQUIRER on Oct. 13, 2003, had been bedridden and hooked to a ventilator for the past four years after a failed surgery in 1999.

Having been abandoned by both parents at birth, Ken is being raised and cared for by three aunts and a grandmother in a small house in Cainta.

Morquio syndrome is caused by the absence of the enzyme needed to break down mucopolysaccharides, which are long chains of sugar molecules used in the building of connective tissues in the body. The incompletely broken down mucopolysaccharides remain stored in the body's cells causing progressive damage, affecting the heart, bones, joints, and the respiratory and central nervous system.

Ken was diagnosed with Morquio syndrome when he was 2 but except for falling sick often and experiencing some difficulty in walking and holding his head up he was growing quite normally.

When he was 4, he was stricken with pneumonia and fell into a coma. It was discovered that the C1 section of his spine had collapsed, leaving him paralyzed. He underwent surgery and a bone graft. Though the operation was considered a success, a portion of the bones in his spine did not fuse properly, resulting in his being bedridden.

There was no money for another operation and no doctor would touch him.

Formidable team

A series of stories in the INQUIRER brought an outpouring of support, in cash and kind. The Philippine Airlines Foundation read about Ken's case and brought it to the attention of neurosurgeon Dr. Willy Lopez, the chair of the PGH's neurosciences department. Lopez assembled a formidable medical team and agreed to perform the surgery for free.

In the early morning of Feb. 21, Ken was fitted with a halo vest, a contraption resembling an angel's halo made of metallic alloy and plastic, to keep his head and neck steady. He was wheeled into the operating room of the PGH where Lopez, spine surgeon Dr. Adrian Catbagan and anesthesiologist Dr. Loreto Fellizar were waiting for him.

The highly delicate operation, which began at 9 a.m. and was initially anticipated to last seven hours, was aimed at correcting the instability in Kenneth's cranio-vertebral junction.

The surgeons inserted titanium plates in the C1 section of the spine, holding them in place with eight screws on the left and six screws on the right. Bone was also grafted on to the area where the titanium plates were placed.

Six hours after the surgery started, Kenneth was being wheeled out of the operating room, alert and with a half-smile.

No pain

After less than 24 hours at the pediatric intensive care unit, Ken was moved into a regular hospital room on Sunday, Feb. 22. He was given a blood transfusion in the evening. By next morning, Kenneth was looking much better. On Feb. 25, he smilingly declared to his doctors that he no longer felt any pain at all.

On Feb. 27, less than a week after surgery, Ken's wounds had healed.

Lopez said the operation can only be considered fully successful in four to six months when the bones in the site of the operation have completely healed and fused.

"We plan to take X-rays every month or every two months to check on how it's healing. Only when he is fully healed will we be able to remove the halo vest," he said.

For now, Lopez said it was important to keep Kenneth free of any post-operative infections. His skin, which must be free of sores and rashes, is being cared for by dermatologist Dr. Edna Aquino-Baello. His physical rehabilitation program is being supervised by Dr. Sharon Ignacio, the head of rehab medicine at the PGH.

Biggest challenge

For now, the biggest challenge is to wean him off the ventilator and Lopez is optimistic this will happen soon. He can now stay off the ventilator for four hours each day.

It helps that Ken's pediatric pulmonologist, Dr. Mike Javier, brings his laptop to Ken's room during his daily visits and together they view VCDs of "Pinocchio," "Land Before Time," "Bruce Almighty" and "Tanging Ina."

"He can do it. He just has to break his psychological dependence on it [the ventilator]. You can see because while watching films, he doesn't complain at all," said Javier.

It is evident that Ken has formed a bond with Javier, and trusts his "Kuya Doc" completely. The relationship inspires the young boy to work harder and get off the ventilator as quickly as possible.

Ken's family is very thankful to all his doctors and all the people who have unselfishly given their help and resources.

"Thank you so much for all the help you have given," he tells the INQUIRER in Filipino on the morning we visited.

Miracles

His aunt, Heddie Villa, says that many miracles have become manifest in Ken's life over the past five months.

"We never thought this day would come. You can see the Lord's hand in everything that has happened to Kenneth. The help and the miracles have not stopped coming," she said in Filipino.

Ken is very eager to go to school. He is a self-taught reader and is musically inclined. He uses his knuckles and fingers to play his toy organ and composes tunes on his cell phone. He is hoping that someone would offer an educational plan that would enable him to get an education.

Expenses have so far amounted to P350,000, which includes hospital fees (including a New Year's Day confinement at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center for pneumonia), and the purchase of a ventilator, pulse oximeter, titanium plates, medicines and others.

Ken is expected to be confined for another seven to 10 days depending on how long it will take to wean him from the ventilator. Then there is the six-month waiting period where it is hoped no complications will set in.

Journey to healing

On March 3, Kenneth was finally able to sit on a wheelchair, a major step in his journey towards healing. Ideally, his doctors want him off the ventilator during the day by the time he is discharged from the hospital.

He remains optimistic and hopeful about the future.

"Jesus will heal me. I don't mind being in wheelchair, I can still do a lot," he says with confidence.

The boy who was strapped to a bed for four long years now delights in bidding his visitors good-bye with an upbeat, "*Hasta la vista*, baby!"

(Those wishing to contribute to Kenneth Villa's recovery fund can call or text Heddie Villa at 0916-6000-548.)

Davide still clueless . . .

From page A1

told reporters at the summit of Provincial and City Councils on the Administration of Justice at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel in Pasay City.

But the President noted that this was not the first time that a high court seat was not filled within 90 days from the retirement of a Supreme Court justice.

"Other presidents have also not met the deadline. The Supreme Court will have to resubmit a list of nominees and which would probably be the same names given to me before," the President said.

Other appointments

During the dinner hosted by the INQUIRER, the President also justified her choice of Comelec commissioners—Virgilio Garcillano and Manuel Barcelona Jr.—which she made a few days before the start of the national campaign period. *(See related story on Page A1.)*

"According to my best lights, these are people who would serve well. One is a career person (Garcillano) and one is a prominent lawyer (Barcelona) with no record of graft and corruption," the President said.

"My rivals in the opposition will always criticize whoever I would appoint," the President said.

But some of the brickbats have also come from her allies such as maverick administration Sen. Joker Arroyo, who issued a blunt statement Sunday.

"The President has deferred for unclear reasons the overdue implementation of Justice Nazario's appointment despite its constitutionally mandated deadline. In the Comelec appointments, where no deadlines have to be met and where the appointments do not appear to have been sufficiently vetted, we have the President acting with undue haste," Arroyo complained.

No word from Palace

Asked about Nazario's appointment, Davide told reporters: "We have not received any communication yet from the Palace regarding that.... The practice is for the original (appointment papers) (to) be transmitted to the Supreme Court."

Malacañang announced Nazario's appointment to the high court on Feb. 11, but the President later said she had decided that Nazario should first complete the Estrada trial.

Nazario was to have replaced Senior Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo, who retired on Nov. 13. Under the Constitution, Ms Macapagal has only 90 days to fill up the vacancy, or until mid-February.

"That's according to the Constitution," Davide said. "It all depends now on the action of the Palace because I have not seen any appointment."

When asked about the apparent violation of the constitutional provision, Davide said: "That could call for a comment or a resolution but we cannot speculate on that because we do not know what is there in the Palace now."

When asked if anyone could be held liable, he said: "I don't make any comment on that. That is all speculation. I can't make any opinion on mere speculations."

Sole prerogative

He declined to comment on other persons who might be appointed, saying that his role as JBC chair is only to transmit the list of nominees to the President "and the president has the sole exclusive prerogative to make the appointment."

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, a member of the JBC, earlier proposed that the JBC resubmit its list of nominees to the President.

Besides Nazario, Supreme Court Administrator Presbitero Velasco Jr., Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo, Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Cancio Garcia, and University of the Philippines law professor Ruben Balane were the other officials included in the JBC list sent to Malacañang on Jan. 28.

13 more bodies recovered

By Leila B. Salaverria

THIRTEEN more bodies have been recovered from the wreck of a ferry destroyed by fire a week ago, but more than 100 others remain missing, the Philippine Coast Guard said yesterday.

Six corpses were recovered from the cabins of the 10,192-ton SuperFerry 14 overnight Thursday, while seven were found on Friday, Coast Guard spokespersons told AFP.

Divers focused their search yesterday on the partly submerged tourist deck and cabins that comprised the remaining 20 percent of the vessel that had not been inspected.

However, accumulated debris on the A-deck is hampering the retrieval of the bodies still aboard the half-sunken ship.

Coast Guard Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo, who is supervising the search operations in Mariveles, Bataan, said that divers have spotted more bodies under the debris, but have yet to retrieve these.

Some of the bodies surfaced when they began to bloat, pushing away some of the debris covering them.

Blocks of wood, metal slabs, and furniture have stacked up on the deck after the 10,000-ton ship tilted to its starboard after it was towed to Sisiman Bay. The PCG is looking at ways to remove the mass without endangering the divers or further degrading the bodies.

Rescuers have a hard time reaching the upper portion, and have to climb 25 meters—approximately the height of a six-story building—to get to the A-deck.

PCG commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan said they may have to turn the ship upright or open up a portion to make the search operation easier.

Four of the six bodies recovered Wednesday have already been identified as Marilou Pamonag, Emilia Asombrado, Benito Asombrado, Jr., and Perlita Canasa. Of the six bodies retrieved Thursday, two were badly burned, but four are still recognizable.

Divers are working double time to look for other bodies that could have been trapped inside the ship. Tamayo said that contrary to reports, the PCG had responded immediately to the distress call, adding that he was among the first to arrive at the site after the call was made.

The ship was engulfed by fire after what survivors described as a mysterious pre-dawn explosion on February 27 as the ferry sailed out of Manila Bay with 899 people on board.

More than 700 other passengers and crew were rescued. The wreck was later towed to shallow waters off Mariveles town, west of Manila.

Coast Guard spokesperson Armando Balilo refused to speculate on the fate of those still missing. *AFP*

AdBoard orders pullout of 'taste 15-year-old' ad

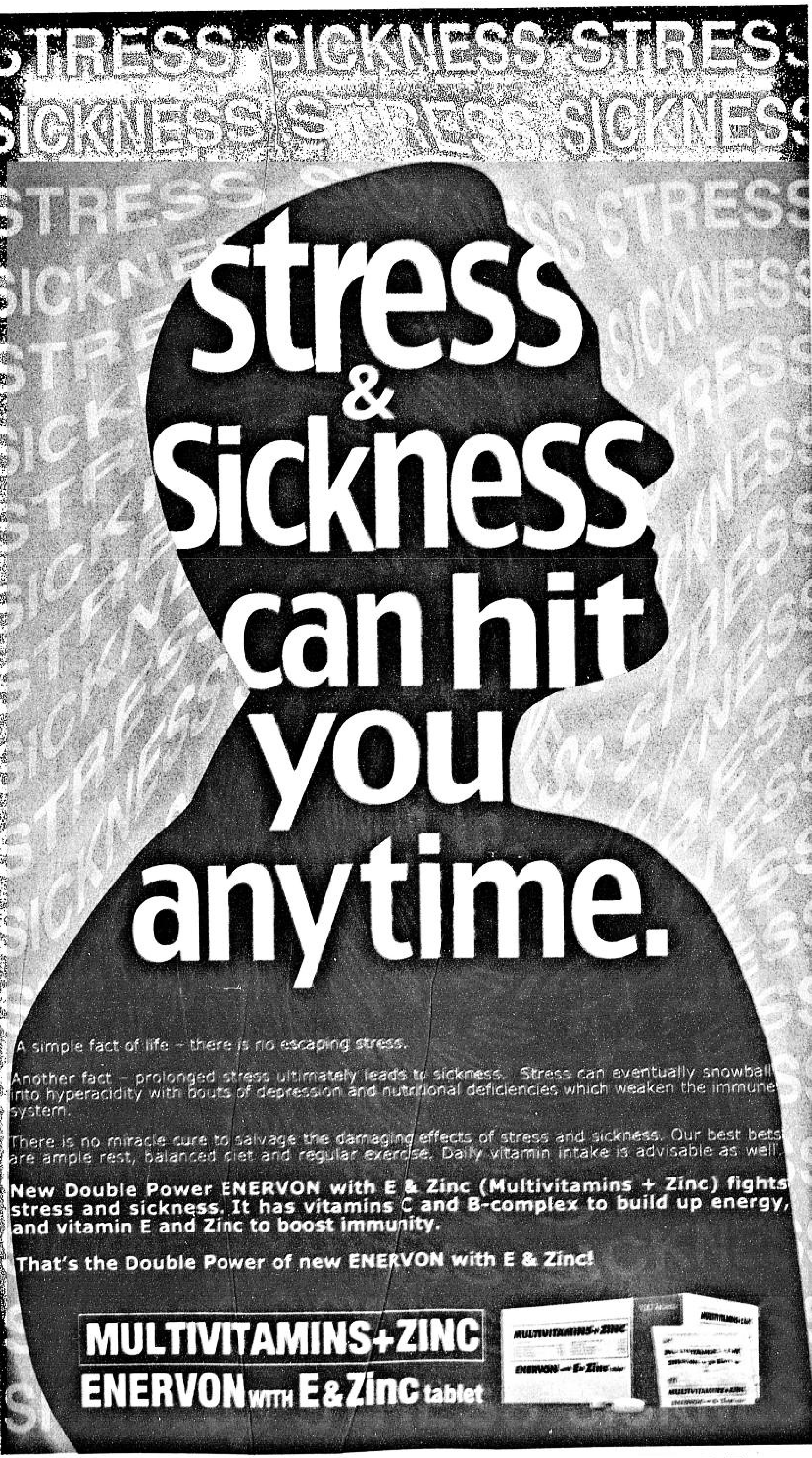
By Volt Contreras and Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE ADVERTISING Board of the Philippines has ordered the pullout of the controversial Napoleon Brandy ad which entices drinkers to "taste a 15-year-old"—a tag line that struck various advocacy groups, including the Archdiocese of Manila, as vulgar.

Citing "numerous complaints" regarding the ad, the board recalled the clearance it earlier issued to the Singson Lascano Group, a Makati City-based ad agency which made the commercial.

"We believe the time has come for you and your client to react positively to all these unfavorable publicity by pulling out your advertising materials," said AdBoard executive director Oscar Valenzuela in a letter dated March 3 to SLG senior account executive Ed Jimenez.

The order applies to both the radio and billboard versions of the Napoleon ad, which drew objections because of its tag line: "*Nakatikim ka na ba ng kinse anyos?* (translated literally as 'have you tasted a 15-year-old?')."



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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Ousted Aristide accuses US, France of kidnapping him

PARIS—Ousted Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide accused France on Thursday of colluding with the United States to remove him from office, saying the former colonial power took part in a "political kidnapping."

Aristide, in a phone conversation with a French writer of which AFP obtained a recording, said he planned to go back to his impoverished Caribbean country, insisting he had not officially resigned.

"There is a document that was signed to avoid a bloodbath but there was no formal resignation," Aristide told Haiti specialist Claude Ribbe, a friend of his. "This political kidnapping was the price to pay to avoid a bloodbath."

He alleged Paris' attitude was in reaction to his demand for the restitution of Haiti's "independence debt" from its former colonial ruler, which Haiti estimates to be worth $21.7 billion (17.8 billion euros).

"It's as clear as the day. I demanded, on behalf of Haiti, the restitution of this debt, which was our right... They (the French) reacted by unkindness, resorting to persecution and a systematic campaign of disinformation, and by colluding in this political kidnapping," he said.

Aristide was speaking from the Central African Republic (CAR), from where he is reportedly expected to travel on to South Africa. But he said any trip to South Africa would only be a step on a journey back to Haiti.

"I'm not the kind of person to stay in exile... If I have to make a stopover in South Africa, I will—before going back home," he said.

After Aristide arrived in the CAR on Monday he said in an interview with CNN television he had been ousted by a coup orchestrated by Washington and then complained he was a prisoner in the capital, Bangui.

The Caribbean Community (Caricom) and South Africa have called for an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Aristide's departure from office as rebels arrived in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince and the country risked descending into a bloodbath.

Pretoria said it would have been a serious breach of international law if it was proved that he had been forced to quit.

But the administration of George W. Bush, which is campaigning for another term in the White House for the incumbent president, rejected calls for an inquiry.

"There is nothing to investigate, we do not encourage nor believe there is any need for an investigation," said US state department spokesperson Richard Boucher said on Thursday. "There was no kidnapping. There was no coup. There were no threats."

Aristide told Ribbe his removal from Haiti had begun at around 6 p.m. on Saturday.

"It was one of the longest nights of my life," he recalled. "I saw US soldiers at the airport with my own eyes."

"We were there (in the plane) for 20 hours without knowing where we were going. It was only 20 minutes before we arrived here that we discovered were going to land here. There were French soldiers with cameras to film it all."

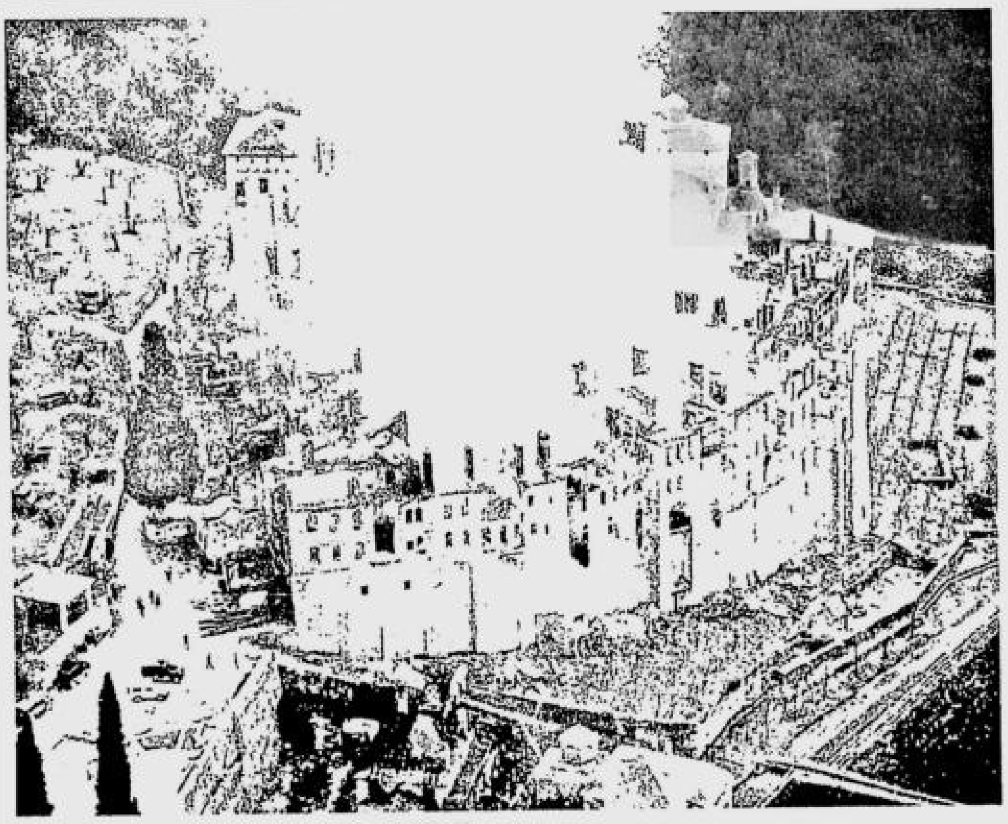
He confirmed a French delegation, led by writer Regis Debray, had visited him in December 2003 to ask him to leave power.

"Absolutely," he said.

Aristide said he did not want to have direct contact with the media but authorized Ribbe to pass on him comments.

"If the truth hasn't been told (already), then people should know about it," he said. *AFP*

PRINCESS Diana during a visit to Chicago, June 1996. AP



DRAT! AFTER 9 CENTURIES, A FIRE

A smoldering fire eats through the 12th-century Serb orthodox Chilandari monastery in the northern Greek, all-male monk community of the Holy Mountain (Athos) March 4. Flames destroyed large parts of the stone-wood monastery, but all its treasures and the 25 monks residing in it were saved. AFP

Asean foreign ministers wrap up talks on strengthening relations

HALONG BAY, Vietnam—Southeast Asian foreign ministers wrapped up their retreat in Vietnam Friday following talks on strengthening regional ties and resolving a spat with the European Union over Burma.

After a lengthy meeting that ended late Thursday, the ministers and representatives of the 10-member Asean bloc were given a chance to relax with a boat trip around Halong Bay's spectacular 3,000 towering limestone islets.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, speaking in his capacity as the chair of the annual retreat, said Thursday's five-hour talks had been productive.

"As usual at an Asean foreign ministers' retreat, we were able to discuss matters of common concern in a very frank and open manner," he told reporters.

An Asean security community, which was one of three "pillars" included in the Bali Concord II endorsed last October at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit, was among the topics discussed, he said.

Together with the creation of similar economic and socio-cultural communities, the concord lays the foundations for the creation of an Asean Community by 2020.

The ministers also discussed the deteriorating situation in Iraq, the North Korean nuclear crisis and the mounting war of words between bitter rivals Taiwan and China ahead of this month's Taiwanese presidential elections.

"We emphasize the need to avoid any actions (across the Taiwan strait) that may further exacerbate the situation," Wirajuda said late Thursday, adding that the ministers had reaffirmed their common one-China stance.

However, the most sensitive discussions centered on the Asia-Europe Meeting which is scheduled to be held in Hanoi in October. *AFP*

9 Iraqis killed in attacks

BAGHDAD—Nine Iraqis were killed in a string of attacks across the war-torn country on Thursday as Nato promised to send troops if it gets a request from the Iraqi government due to take over on July 1.

Polish troops also said they had captured seven al-Qaida suspects and Karbala law enforcement officials accused the US-supervised interior ministry of short supplying before this week's devastating bombings at a religious festival.

Three Iraqis were killed and at least five wounded in a rocket attack by unknown assailants in southwest Baghdad late Thursday, police and witnesses said.

The target of the attack was not immediately clear, but an AFP journalist said the rocket exploded about 100 meters from a US military base.

Violence also dogged the northern city of Mosul, where three policemen and two civilians were killed in a rocket and automatic rifle attack, police said.

Another Iraqi police officer was killed and two others seriously wounded in the northern city of Kirkuk when gunmen attacked their patrol, police said.

A US soldier was also wounded near Baquba, in central Iraq, when a homemade bomb exploded near his convoy.

Earlier, Polish troops said they had arrested seven al-Qaida suspects since mid-January, including two in the past week, in the countdown to the rampage on the Shiite Muslim holy city during the Ashura pilgrimage.

The Polish military spokesperson conceded the US-led coalition had anticipated Tuesday's spectacular bombings, but stuck to a security plan putting Iraqi forces in charge of the city for the major holiday.

Polish Warrant Officer Zbigniew Dabkiewicz said two of the suspects were connected with Jordanian Abu Mussab al-Zarqavi, the US-led coalition's prime suspect the Karbala and Baghdad attacks. *AFP*

'Secret' tapes reveal desperate side of Diana

WASHINGTON—Audio recordings of the late Princess Diana pouring her heart out clandestinely, aired by NBC television Thursday, reveal a beloved icon who was secretly wrestling with bulimia and thoughts of suicide.

"The public side was very different, obviously, from the private side," Diana said on the 1991 tapes, recorded in secret by an intermediary for royal biographer Andrew Morton.

"The public side, they wanted a fairy princess to come, touch them and everything would turn into gold and all their worries would be forgotten," Diana said.

"Little did they realize that... the individual (was) crucifying herself inside, because she didn't think she was good enough."

Of her 1981 wedding to Prince Charles, Diana recalls, "I felt I was a lamb to the slaughter. The whole thing was ridiculous."

Their wedding night, she says, was "very strange."

As their honeymoon began aboard the royal yacht Britannia, Diana says, "I had tremendous hope, but it was slashed by day two.

"I remember crying my heart out on my honeymoon.

"The first week back home after the honeymoon I learned to be a royal in one week," she says. "I was thrown into the deep end. Nobody ever helped me at all."

Diana's battle with bulimia became a bit more public in 1986, when she fainted during a trip to Canada with Prince Charles. Publicly, officials blamed fatigue for the fainting spell, but in private, she said Charles was cross with her.

"My husband told me off," she said. "He said I could have passed out quietly somewhere else, behind a door. It was all very embarrassing... And inside me I knew there was something wrong with me, but I was too immature to voice it."

In talking about a 1982 suicide attempt, Diana painted a picture of a rather cold, aloof Charles.

Three months' pregnant and feeling miserable as her marriage was on the rocks, Diana said she spoke with Charles and threatened to kill herself.

"Charles said I was crying wolf, and I said I felt so desperate, and I was crying my eyes out. And he said, 'I'm not going to listen. You're always doing this to me.' He said, 'I'm going riding now.' *AFP*

Japan robbers cart away gems worth $31.5 million

TOKYO—Two men robbed a jewelry shop of gems worth $31.5 million (3.5 billion yen) in broad daylight in Japan's upscale shopping district of Ginza Friday, police said.

"Two men visited the shop as customers... One of them threw some liquid over a store clerk and punched him while the other broke into the showcases with a hammer," a police officer from a nearby station said.

They stole several items including a diamond necklace priced at three billion yen from the Le Supre-Diamant Couture de Maki store, police quoted the manager as saying.

The 21-year-old shop clerk sustained minor injuries to his face, another officer confirmed.

Police are searching for the robbers, who are "believed to be caucasians with blue eyes" and between 35 to 40.

Le Supre-Diamant Couture de Maki is located just a block away from Ginza's main intersection and does not employ security guards, according to police.

Hundreds of shoppers gathered around the shop's surrounds, which were cordoned off, many photographing the scene with their mobile phones. *AFP*

What's the fuss? Gay marriage old news in Holland, other lands

By Toby Sterling

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands—Amsterdam's mayor officiated at the Netherlands' first gay wedding three years ago—and since then, the issue has all but disappeared from the country's political agenda.

While the United States is engaged in fierce debate over gay marriage, Canadians are discussing a federal law to legalize it and many European countries legally recognize civil unions.

But in the Netherlands, nobody really talks about the issue anymore.

"It's really become less of something that you need to explain," says Anne-Marie Thus, who in 2001 married Helene Faasen. "We're totally ordinary. We take our children to preschool every day. People know they don't have to be afraid of us."

Around the world, countries are coming to terms with how to treat same-sex couples—and the trend in many is toward liberalizing laws.

In Denmark, civil unions with the same rights as marriage have been around since 1989, and other Nordic countries followed suit in the 1990s.

The Dutch were the first to eliminate any distinction between gay and straight, striking all references to gender in the marriage laws. Belgium soon did the same.

Canada jumped to the forefront of gay rights in North America in June when it announced plans to legalize same-sex marriages. Many same-sex couples streamed north to marry in Ottawa and British Columbia after courts in those provinces authorized weddings.

In most of Africa, homosexuality is illegal and gay marriage unthinkable. But in South Africa, gay rights were enshrined in the post-apartheid constitution and some groups are lobbying for the right to marry.

In Japan, homosexuality is no longer considered a mental illness as it once was, but many gays still feel pressure to go through with a sham heterosexual marriage.

In Malaysia, homosexuality remains illegal and sodomy is punishable by up to 20 years in prison, but the laws are rarely enforced and gays are mostly left alone if they keep to themselves. Gay marriage is not under consideration in this predominantly Muslim country.

Gay rights activists in the Philippines say a few unofficial same-sex marriage ceremonies have taken place, but are not recognized by law. Michael Urbano, a spokesperson for the rights group Pro-Gay, said Filipino gays face more pressing problems than seeking a law recognizing same-sex marriages.

"It's a right that gays should enjoy, but we should first face the primary problem of gays—it's discrimination and homophobia," said Urbano, who added that many gays in the Philippines are forced into sham heterosexual marriages due to pressure from their families.

Strongly Roman Catholic countries such as Spain and Italy refuse to recognize gay couples, following the Vatican's abhorrence of homosexuality. But there are important exceptions.

In Portugal, and in Spain's Navarra and Basque regions, gay couples who live together long enough receive the same benefits as heterosexuals covered by common law unions. In Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, gay couples can register for a civil union.

And Brazil's southern state of Rio Grande do Sul has became the first in Brazil to permit civil unions between same-sex couples and granting them the same rights as married couples in a court order announced Thursday.

France and Germany recognize civil union laws, and Britain is in the process of adopting them.

The Dutch have watched the hoopla in the United States with some bemusement. Amsterdam Mayor Job Cohen, who married six couples at the stroke of midnight on April 1, 2001, when the Dutch law took effect, sent a note of support to Gavin Newsom, the San Francisco mayor who set off a rush to California when he officiated same-sex ceremonies.

In contrast to Amsterdam's boisterous gay clubs and the spring rite of the Gay Pride parade through its famed canals, Faasen and Thus, the Dutch lesbian couple, live a quiet middle-class life in a neat apartment on the city's outskirts. They hardly seem like revolutionaries, or even trendsetters. *AP*

ONLY MAN FOUND GUILTY OF ATTACKS

German court overturns Sept. 11 conviction

KARLSRUHE, Germany—A German appeals court Thursday threw out the conviction of the only man found guilty anywhere in the world over the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States, and ordered a new trial.

The federal appeals court in Karlsruhe said the evidence against Mounir El Motassadeq, a Moroccan student and close friend of three of the suicide hijackers, was insufficient for a guilty verdict.

The five-judge panel singled out US authorities for blame after their repeated refusal to make a key witness available to the court and suggested they had violated international legal agreements.

"The fight against terrorism cannot be a wild, unjust war," presiding judge Klaus Tolksdorf said as he read the verdict.

"A conflict between the security interests of the executive and the rights to defense of the accused cannot be resolved to the disadvantage of the accused."

The ruling dealt another stinging blow to German federal prosecutors, just weeks after a fellow suspect was acquitted on similar charges, and puts fresh pressure on Washington to provide evidence for the new trial.

Interior Minister Otto Schily called the decision "regrettable" but noted that the suspect had not been acquitted and would be prosecuted again.

Motassadeq was jailed in February 2003 by a court in the northern city of Hamburg for the maximum 15 years on more than 3,000 counts of accessory to murder and membership in a terrorist organization for his alleged role in the plotting of the passenger jet assault in New York and Washington.

A suspected member of the so-called Hamburg cell of Islamic extremists that produced three of the hijackers including alleged ringleader Mohammed Atta, he has been in custody since November 2001.

One of his attorneys, Josef Graessle-Muenscher, told reporters he would file a motion to have his client released "immediately" pending a new trial in Hamburg and that a decision could come as early as next week.

A spokeswoman for the Hamburg court said it could be several months before a new trial.

A lawyer representing American relatives of victims, Andreas Schulz, said the difference in the German and US perspectives on Sept. 11 trials came down to whether a "fight" or a "war" against terrorism was being fought, and what means were justified. *AFP*

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GONE FISHING
A determined Russian, covered with plastic bag for protection from the wind and cold, fishes through an ice hole at the Finnish Gulf, to the West of St. Petersburg, as the sun rises, March 5. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Bush campaign attacked

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush's campaign on Thursday launched an advertising blitz that came under immediate attack for using images from the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes. Bush meanwhile went on the offensive against Democratic contender Sen. John Kerry saying the Massachusetts lawmaker was incapable of defending America against terrorists. Relatives of the dead from the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, along with firefighters' unions, accused the president of using pictures of firemen working in the debris of the twin World Trade Center towers for political gain. The Bush campaign insisted, however, that the adverts—to be aired in 17 states that could prove decisive in the Nov. 2 presidential election—were a "very tasteful" portrayal of the nation's shared trauma. *AFP*

Majority of Israelis want Sharon out

JERUSALEM—Battered by multiple scandals, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a fresh blow on Friday when an opinion poll in Israel's biggest newspaper showed that for the first time a majority of Israelis want him to quit. The former general has vowed to weather the storms kicked up by allegations of corruption and misconduct that he denies. But much will depend on whether prosecutors now weighing criminal charges against Sharon decide to indict him. The poll in the Yedioth Ahronoth daily found that 53 percent of those surveyed believe Sharon should resign as a result of the scandals, while 43 percent wanted him to stay on. Already under investigation in two separate corruption scandals, Sharon came under another cloud this week when the Maariv newspaper alleged misconduct in a prisoner swap with Hezbollah guerrillas. It reported that Sharon once had a business relationship with the father-in-law of Elhanan Tannenbaum, an Israeli businessman freed by the the Lebanese group on Jan. 29 in exchange for about 400 Arab prisoners. *Reuters*

Needles stuck in man's brain

BEIJING—Doctors in China have successfully removed three sewing needles embedded in a man's brain for nearly 29 years, state media reported Friday. The man, surnamed Guo, and his parents had no idea how the needles got into his head, but doctors who performed the unusual operation said someone likely stuck them through a membranous space in his skull when he was a baby. "It's not possible for a needle to penetrate the skull otherwise, because the skull is extremely hard," Xinhua news agency quoted Zhang Zhiqiang, one of the neurosurgeons at the 999 Hospital for Brain Diseases in southern Guangdong province, as saying. Guo only found out about the needles only after an X-ray in 1994 for a brain injury. Since then, he has travelled to several cities trying to find doctors who could help him remove them, but no-one dared carry out the surgery. "They simply told him it was too risky, and he should just ignore them if they were not making him too uncomfortable," Zhang said. *AFP*

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"I'LL DO what I can whatever is within the law to care for his personal circumstances."

"NOT me. The prosecution is the Ombudsman, the Sandigan, the custodians are the police…."

PHOTOS BY JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

"THIS is not in exchange for his support in the election. He's supporting the other side. No deal with Estrada."

Erap now in Tanay villa in Rizal

From page A1

rest house] to take a walk, take in the sun and do some exercise."

But the source could not say who allowed the ex-President to move to his rest house, which is part of a 15-hectare vacation estate with a swimming pool and a private chapel right across from Camp Capinpin.

Housing Secretary Mike Defensor said: "If this is true, I think there is nothing wrong with it. It shows that his welfare is being taken care of and he is being treated as you would a former head of state."

'Still here'

But according to Estrada, it cannot be said that he is staying in his rest house because he goes back to his detention quarters to sleep.

"I'm still here at Camp Capinpin," he said yesterday in a phone interview.

He admitted, however, that he was spending at least two days a week in his rest house.

He said that if he had guests, he would ask permission to spend time there from Chief Supt. Rolando Sacramento, head of the police contingent assigned to guard him. Sacramento, in turn, brings up the matter with Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, he said.

"I only go there when I have visitors. I am heavily escorted all the time," Estrada said.

He attends Mass at the estate every Sunday, he said.

Asked about the matter, Sandiganbayan chief sheriff Ed Urieta said that from what he knew, Estrada continued to stay in Camp Capinpin.

"The court has not granted him permission to stay in his rest house. He is not on house arrest," Urieta said in a phone interview. But he said it could be possible that Estrada was visiting his house from time to time.

He also pointed out that Estrada's rest house was near Camp Capinpin.

No deal

Ms Macapagal denied that the arrangement for Estrada was related to her standing for election on May 10.

"I don't think so, I don't think so," she said, chuckling, when asked if she expected Estrada to now support her.

"Oh, no," she added. "Isn't it that he keeps on issuing statements [against me]? He's very actively supporting the other side, so this is not in exchange for his support."

Ms Macapagal said she had no alliance or deal with Estrada: "I don't have a win-at-all-cost strategy. I gave my policy in July 2001. I'm consistent and I'm transparent. I said it, I declared it in my Sona."

Defensor, Ms Macapagal's campaign spokesperson, also denied that the administration was being lenient toward Estrada as a way of courting votes from his supporters.

Visits, meetings

Reliable sources told the INQUIRER that Defensor, Ms Macapagal's personal emissary to the ousted leader, visited Estrada in his rest house twice in December and once in January.

The sources said it was also in this rest house that Estrada met with opposition leaders including Miriam Defensor-Santiago on Feb. 8, when the ex-senator sought his permission to join the administration's K-4 senatorial slate.

"I visited President Estrada, yes," Defensor told the INQUIRER when asked to confirm his visit. But he refused to say if the visit happened in Estrada's rest house.

Defensor, a member of the "Spice Boys" group of young congressmen who led efforts in the House to impeach Estrada in 2000, last met with the latter to discuss his departure for medical treatment abroad.

The Sandiganbayan recently gave Estrada permission to travel abroad to seek treatment for his knee ailment and slipped disc. But Estrada has yet to firm up his travel plans.

A source said Estrada appeared at ease in his rest house, which reportedly has "comfortable" interiors and furnishings including a "nice kitchen table," and has a floor area of about 200 square meters.

Laarni

The source said Estrada mistress Laarni Enriquez was there when some visitors called on the ex-President.

For the occasion, according to the source, Estrada served good food and *pulutan* (bar chow) to those who had a glass or two of his wine.

The source said the swimming pool was previously open to the public but was reverted to private use after the rest house was recently renovated.

The house, made of wood, is "not lavish" and consists of a living room, a kitchen, Estrada's room, and an open-style attic, the source said.

It was once described as a "Mediterranean-style villa."

The source added that it was the privacy, the cool mountain air, and the opportunity to walk around in the sprawling estate that made Estrada hanker for the place.

Swimming

"I can't swim. I just love to see people swim," Estrada said in describing the cool comforts of the vacation estate that he acquired and developed in 1969.

But he said the media groups who visited him in December and January could vouch for the fact that he was staying in Camp Capinpin.

"Your [opinion] columnist Neal Cruz can confirm that I met them in my Camp Capinpin quarters," he said. "This is no house arrest."

But Estrada admitted asking the Sandiganbayan to allow him to stay in his rest house and to visit his ailing mother in San Juan at least once a week.

He said that among the improvements on the property were the renovation of the swimming pool constructed in 1970 and the conversion of a bodega into a private chapel.

He also said he loved just watching people, especially his grandchildren, enjoy a swim.

Humane treatment

Ms Macapagal has declared a policy of humane treatment for her detained predecessor, who was deposed in 2001 when Filipinos appalled by his and his extended family's excesses mounted Edsa II.

On the 18th anniversary of Edsa I, she told the mostly pro-Estrada residents of the Baseco compound in Tondo, Manila, that she would ensure justice and a fair trial for the ousted President.

FPJ major handicap is Estrada, says pollster

From page A1

but compare Poe with his best friend, who was also a popular movie actor prior to running for public office.

The people know that Estrada served as mayor, senator and vice president before he became president and yet did not perform well and was booted out, Miranda noted.

He noted as well that Poe did not have the political and work experience of Estrada, leading people to think that what happened to Estrada might also happen to Poe.

"We can't say that people are stupid. They are saying that maybe Poe is not yet ready," Miranda said.

Ability, not image

At the Kilosbayan forum, Miranda said Estrada had made people realize that electing a president should not be based on image, but on the ability to run a country.

Miranda said that for the last 20 years, Filipinos mainly voted on the basis of a candidate's being "approachable and pro-poor." And with his "Erap para sa Mahirap" slogan, Estrada was the runaway winner in the 1998 elections.

"But when Erap was ousted, *nagbago ang timpla ng tao* (people changed their views)," Miranda said.

Estrada was ousted in January 2001 on the basis of accusations of corruption.

According to a recent Pulse Asia survey, the top qualifications that Filipinos look for now in a candidate are if he/she can enforce the law equally and if he/she is sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced in running a country.

Whether a candidate is pro-poor is now only the third consideration.

'Impressive change'

"This is an impressive change. For 20 years, people wanted someone approachable and pro-poor. After 2001, this was not the basis anymore," Miranda said.

He said "even the poorest in the country" now make calculated decisions: "They are not swayed by star power."

Miranda said he had recommended to President Macapagal-Arroyo to give Estrada a medal or an award "for making people fully aware of the need [among public officials] for knowledge of public administration."

Poe has admitted to having no experience in governance, but said he had no record of corruption either. He is also counting on his popularity and the support of fellow movie stars to win over the electorate.

Miranda said this tack might have worked for Poe, "but since he has Erap, that liberal benefit of the doubt is not given easily."

Anyone's ball game

Miranda also said that even though Poe and Ms Macapagal were the frontrunners in the latest surveys, the presidential race was still anyone's ball game.

He cited a "big" chunk—24 to 28 percent—of "swing votes," on top of the 8.1-percent undecided on whom to vote for, as of the latest Pulse Asia survey.

"Statistically, you have people saying, 'Let me think my decision through.' Statistically, there's no breakaway candidate among the presidential candidates," Miranda said, adding:

"Even those in the tail-end can make a stunning turnaround."

The Pulse Asia survey conducted on Jan. 23-Feb. 8 showed Ms Macapagal and Poe "statistically tied" at 31.9 and 31.7 percent, respectively.

Raul Roco followed with 16.2 percent; Sen. Panfilo Lacson, 10.7 percent; evangelist Eddie Villanueva, 1.2 percent; and Eddie Gil, 0.2 percent.

The latest Social Weather Station survey conducted on Feb. 17-25 also showed a "statistical tie" between Ms Macapagal and Poe at 31.8 and 30.5 percent, respectively.

Roco was still third with 17.9 percent; Lacson, 11.4 percent; Villanueva, 1.8 percent; and Gil, .03 percent. Those undecided comprised 6.6 percent.

Another weakness

Miranda told the INQUIRER that like Poe, Estrada did not present his platform of government during his campaign. When asked for his plans, Estrada would smile and charm his way out.

On the other hand, Miranda said, Poe would say something like "Hindi ka sisikatan ng araw (The sun will no longer rise on you)—a statement, he noted, that made people uncomfortable.

The implied violence of this statement does not sit well with people who mostly disapprove of alternatives involving violence like coups and military juntas, Miranda said.

Miranda also said another weakness of Poe's campaign was the perceived lack of unity in his camp. The movie idol is projected to be the one to unite the country but he cannot even unite the party supporting him, Miranda said, referring to the fact that different factions in the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino were supporting Poe and Lacson.

'Bloody' solution

In contrast, Ms Macapagal's campaign has been streamlined, Miranda told the INQUIRER.

"They have solved the problem of too many cooks," he said, adding that the solution "must have been bloody" as it meant sidelining certain people like Norberto Gonzales, then presidential adviser for special concerns, and Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez.

But it is beginning to pay off, he said.

Miranda, however, pointed out that the increase in Ms Macapagal's rating, like the decrease in Poe's rating, as based on the Feb. 17-25 Pulse Asia survey, was marginal.

There is no breakaway candidate yet, he said.

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SCORING AGAINST KIDNAPPING
President Macapagal and anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes present to the media three kidnapping suspects, including the alleged mastermind in the kidnapping and killing of Coca-Cola executive Betty Chua Sy, following their arrest the past few days. They are (from left) Romeo Puria, the suspected mastermind in the Chua Sy kidnapping, Sergio Macanip Jr. and Gerardo Anover. *(Story on Page A17.)*

ROGER MARGALLO

Big Mike big target

From page A1

not have a seat on the K-4 caravan, he works tirelessly behind the scene meeting with supporters. "He's conducting his own town hall meetings," the President said.

In the past, most of the criticisms hurled against the President involved alleged wheeling and dealing by Arroyo in the family-owned LTA Building in Makati City. One of the biggest scandals faced by the President last year was when Sen. Panfilo Lacson charged that Arroyo used a fictitious account under Jose Pidal to launder campaign funds.

Last seen

Since the campaign season started on Feb. 10, the First Gentleman has not been seen on stage with the President in her sorties. Big Mike has also been missed in the commercial ads and TV shows where Ms Macapagal appeared with one or all of her children.

The couple were last seen together during the Valentine's Day homecoming of the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City.

In a previous interview, Arroyo said he was eager to join his wife on the campaign trail like he did when Ms Macapagal ran for the Senate and Vice President. Arroyo said he was willing to shed some pounds and learn new steps so he can dance the popular hit "Otso-Otso" on stage.

Some pundits have suggested that Ms Macapagal contemplate a complete separation from her husband to boost her political stock.

This is farthest from her mind. "What God has put together, let no man put asunder. I would rather follow God than some sectors," said the President who has ignored allegations by Lacson in the Jose Pidal exposé that her husband has had an affair with his executive secretary Vicky Toh.

Lacson reported yesterday that Ms Toh was back in town although he had no information if she had left again. She was reported to be in Vancouver when Lacson unleashed his Jose Pidal exposé. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

20 DPWH execs charged in ₱140-M car repair scam

From page A1

filed plunder charges with the Sandiganbayan against the 20 DPWH officials and 10 private citizens who were found to have made false transactions and claims for the bogus repair of 521 vehicles at the department from March to December 2001.

Overwhelming evidence

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said that he was confident the anti-graft court will find "probable cause" for plunder and order the arrest of the 20 officials because of the overwhelming evidence contained in the 3 ft-high stack of documents submitted by the Ombudsman.

Plunder is a non-bailable capital offense.

Maximo Borje Jr., the former head of the DPWH motor pool section, is the main accused in the case, said Villa-Ignacio.

His co-accused are Burt B. Favorito, Florendo B. Arias, Erdito Quarto, Agerico Palaypay, Napoleon S. Anas, Danilo Planta, Luisito dela Rosa, Rogelio Beray, Norma Villarmino, Ricardo M. Juan, Nelson Umali, Maria Luisa T. Cruz, Melissa Espina, Violeta Tadeo, Jessica Catibayan, Violeta Amor, Ronaldo Simbahan, Felipe San Jose and Rolando C. Castillo.

False claims

The private respondents, mostly car-parts suppliers, are Conchita de la Cruz, Janette Bugayong, Jesus Capuz, Rodellia Uy, Romeo Fullido, Victoria Go, Carmelito Edem, Augusto Capuz and Vicente Santos Jr.

Borje was named the principal respondent because he was alleged to have accumulated an estimated P82,321,855.38 from "false claims and transactions."

According to Villa-Ignacio, Borje may have made P374,190.25 from "false daily charges or reimbursements" in the 10 months that the irregularities were reported to have occurred.

"He was claiming payment on vouchers at the rate of P374,190.25 a day," said Villa-Ignacio.

At this rate, the DPWH might as well have purchased brand-new vehicles "every two days rather than repair them," he said.

Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo reportedly personally took charge of the investigation and the filing of the graft cases before the Sandiganbayan.

Grafters beware

"The plain message from the Office of the Ombudsman seems to be that grafters in government can do their worse, but the long arm of the law will catch up with them. So beware," the Ombudsman said in a statement.

Villa-Ignacio said the case was strengthened when three of the accused decided to turn state witness.

"Those in the know about large-scale corruption should come out now or be found out and charged with plunder," he said. They will be given immunity, he added.

"If not, we can come after them and charge them with graft," Villa-Ignacio said.

He said the respondents will each be charged with graft so the government can seize their assets.

Next step

"The next step would be to identify and freeze their assets," he said.

Villa-Ignacio said the filing of plunder charges was just the beginning of a series of charges to be filed before the Sandiganbayan this month.

Marcelo earlier said his office was set to resolve this month five of about 10 graft cases filed last year against officials from the DPWH and the customs and internal revenue bureaus who failed the lifestyle-check program.

Former Public Works Secretary Simeon Datumanong created a fact-finding committee to look into the vehicle repair scam in January 2002.

After a six-month investigation, the committee found that the department had spent a whopping P139.63 million in 6,928 transactions for the repair of 578 vehicles in 2001 alone.

The DPWH has 147 official motor vehicles and 400 service vehicles, most of them acquired through foreign-assisted projects.

'Emergency' repairs

According to the fact-finding report, many of the repairs never took place while others, reported as "emergency" repairs, were "not exceptionally urgent or absolutely indispensable."

Datumanong ordered the relief of 41 employees of the department for alleged involvement in the scam.

They included bureau directors, division chiefs, inspectors, accountants, bookkeepers, computer operators and canvassers who allegedly connived in undertaking the ghost repairs of the official vehicles.

The three bureau directors were re-instated because they were presidential appointees. President Macapagal-Arroyo immediately placed them under preventive detention.

She also ordered Datumanong to investigate two department undersecretaries for not immediately reporting the irregularities.

7,000 anomalies

The Senate public works committee conducted public hearings on the issue in August 2002. It found "more than 7,000 anomalous cases" involving the repair and servicing of vehicles at the DPWH in a period of only one year.

These included: the purchase of automobile seat covers and lighters listed as emergency repairs; five spare tires purchased for just one car; one vehicle that had its front and rear windshields replaced three times in two months; and another car that had its fuel pump replaced three times between June and December 2001.

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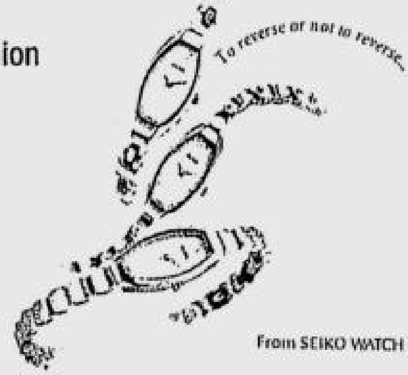
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Cult leader drops mayoralty bid

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—With his temporary freedom hanging in the balance, cult leader Ruben Ecleo Jr. has dropped his mayoralty bid in San Jose, Dinagat Island in Surigao del Norte, the base of a religious group of which he is the "supreme master."

Ecleo's lawyer, Orlando Salatandre, made the announcement yesterday a day after Cebu Regional Trial Court Judge Generosa Labra said she might withdraw the bail she granted to the cult leader because she did not know he was planning to run for mayor.

She said the main reason for granting bail to Ecleo was his health condition, so if he is running for public office he might not be as sick as he claimed.

Salantrande yesterday said Ecleo will be replaced by his younger sister, Geraldine Ecleo-Villaroman.

Last Wednesday, Salatandre told the INQUIRER that there was no problem because Ecleo was running unopposed.

Ecleo's mother, Surigao del Norte Rep. Glenda Ecleo is seeking reelection to Congress. His sister, Gwendolyn, is running unopposed as mayor of Dinagat town, also on Dinagat Island.

The Ecleos are running under the administration party of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats. They are also supporting the bids of reelectionist Sen. Robert Barbers who hails from Surigao del Norte and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ecleo, "supreme master" of Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA), is facing parricide charges for allegedly killing his wife, Alona Bacolod, 27, on Jan. 5, 2002. Her body was found three days inside a garbage bag in a ravine in Dalaguete town, Cebu.

After two years of staying at the city jail, Ecleo was given a second shot at freedom, albeit temporary, when last Monday, Judge Generosa Labra of the Regional Trial Court Branch 23 allowed him to post bail bond of P1 million for "humanitarian reason."

US gives 'Robot' tipster P550,000

ZAMBOANGA CITY—US authorities yesterday gave a P550,000 reward to an informant who helped the Philippine military arrest top Abu Sayyaf guerrilla leader Galib Andang.

US military adviser Maj. Don Dridgers handed the money to the masked informant, who remained unidentified and was described only by Filipino authorities as a former member of the Islamic rebel group.

The United States considers the Abu Sayyaf a "terrorist organization" and has sent military advisers to the southern Philippines to train Filipinos fighting the rebels, who have been mounting a kidnapping and bombing campaign in this largely Christian nation.

"We will continue to support the Philippines' anti-terror campaign," Dridgers told reporters after the ceremony at a military camp in this city.

Andang, also known as "Commander Robot," lost a leg in a shootout with government troops in Jolo in December.

He faces multiple murder and kidnapping charges, including over a 2000 raid on the Sipadan island resorts in nearby Malaysia in which 21 Western tourists and Asian resort workers were abducted and taken across the sea by boat to Jolo in the Sulu archipelago.

Most of the captives were ransomed off for millions of dollars, while the last captive, a Filipino, later escaped.

"The United States is working closely with the Philippines in fighting terrorism and the US will continue to support this effort," said Maj. Jon Guerco, a counterterrorist officer with the Hawaii-based US Pacific Command.

Philippine Navy Commodore George Uy said it was the first time the United States had handed out rewards for the capture of a top Abu Sayyaf leader.

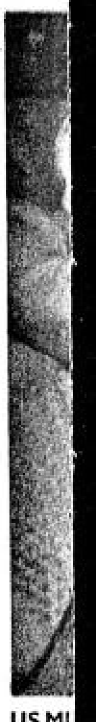
"The monetary reward system has been a factor in the capture of Commander Robot and other top rebel Abu Sayyaf leaders in the past. Today, civilian informants, including some Abu Sayyaf members and relatives offer information to the military," Uy said.

The military had earlier paid the informant a P5-million reward.

Meanwhile, Filipino troops shot dead Abu Sayyaf gunman Abdul Baki in a firefight in Jolo late Wednesday, military spokespersons said.

Baki is a suspect in the abduction of Spanish nun Fatima Uribaren 11 years ago, as well as in the assassination of Roman Catholic Bishop Benjamin Inocencio of Jolo in the early 1990s. The nun was later released.

Philippine and US authorities once linked the Abu Sayyaf to al-Qaida. *AFP*



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LITARY official Maj. Don Dridgers hands over attache case containing 00 to a former Abu Sayyaf member who gave information leading to the ander Robot on Friday in Zamboanga City. AP

Explosives, guns seized in Nueva Ecija raid

By Alcuin Papa

POLICE and military agents seized a cache of explosives and firearms during a raid on a house in Nueva Ecija early Friday and arrested a mechanic who had planned to deliver the weapons to a Muslim buyer in Manila.

Seized from the house of Mario Barrientos, alias Kato, 43, of Barangay Pula, Talavera, Nueva Ecija were an M16 Baby Armalite automatic rifle, two 9mm Beretta pistols, a .38 cal. revolver pistol, a .22 cal. Pistol, two long blocks of C4 explosives, 17 Vietnam War-era Claymore anti-personnel mines and assorted ammunitions and magazines.

Also seized during the raid was a van with a false floor.

Police presented Barrientos to reporters after his arrest. The suspect said he was supposed to deliver the weapons to a buyer which he identified as a certain "Khalid" in a Muslim part of Manila's Quiapo district.

Barrientos is presently undergoing tactical interrogation by the Nueva Ecija police.

Investigation revealed that Barrientos was a recent convert to Islam. But Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao said it has not been established if Barrientos has links to the Abu Sayyaf group or any armed Muslim group.

Under surveillance

An army spokesperson said the mechanic has been under surveillance since October after a tip-off from neighbors.

Armed Forces of the Philippines Vice Chief of staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia said that based on reports they have received, Barrientos is not an Abu Sayyaf member. "We are jumping to conclusions if we say he is a terrorist."

In his report, Supt. Rhoderick Armamento, chief of the Nueva Ecija Police Intelligence and Investigation Branch, said Barrientos was a "big-time gun and explosives dealer in Nueva Ecija."

Barrientos was arrested during the raid by Nueva Ecija police, the 307th Provincial Mobile Group and the AFP's Anti-Crime Task Force.

The raid was conducted based on a search warrant issued by Cabanatuan City Regional Trial Court judge Rodrigo Caspillo for illegal possession of firearms.

Garcia said the source of the C4 explosives "could normally be the military" but quickly added that the explosives "could have been taken from other sources or smuggled from abroad."

As this developed, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday commended the Nueva Ecija PNP for the arrest of Barrientos whom he said could be a "suicide bomber."

Lacson was in Nueva Ecija on Thursday and on Friday for his campaign sorties when the raid was conducted.

Commendation

"My concern is the number of people who would have been hurt and the police should be commended for preempting the bombing attempt," he added.

But Avelino Razon, national police operations chief, told Reuters that it appeared that Barrientos is only involved in illegal gun trade."

"There's no conclusive information that he is a bomber or is trying to assemble a car bomb." *With reports from Norman Bordadora, Reuters*

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EDITORIALS

Relief

ON THE DAY the *amici curiae* (friends of the court) trooped to the Supreme Court to be heard on the disqualification petition against Fernando Poe Jr., Susan Roces appeared before thousands of her husband's supporters in Plaza Miranda and told them to keep calm. The majority went along with her call, but a minority disobeyed her. Since then that significant minority of her husband's supporters have continued to disobey her and her husband's call to respect the Supreme Court.

The Court's decision throwing out the petition has been greeted with jubilation by Poe and his camp, and with relief by the rest of the country, whatever their political stripes. But as many observers have noted, the majority decision simply dismissed the petition to disqualify him as a presidential candidate but it did not completely rule out the possibility that he could still be stripped of the presidency should he win in the elections on the basis of his questioned paternity. In other words, Victorino Fornier or some other lawyer can still pursue his quest to have Poe disqualified even after he is elected to the presidency, if that should come to pass. That is clearly a very dangerous, incendiary proposition, and one which should not be pursued.

By declaring that the proper body to decide the disqualification of a candidate before an election is the Commission on Elections, the Court did not deny itself the constitutionally-ordained duty of being the tribunal to adjudge disqualification cases arising after a presidential election. What the Constitution allows is not necessarily what is in the public interest to cause to be exercised. If the nation was already nervous when the disqualification petition was still being heard, the situation would certainly be lot messier should anyone try to bar Poe from assuming office in the event that he wins the presidency.

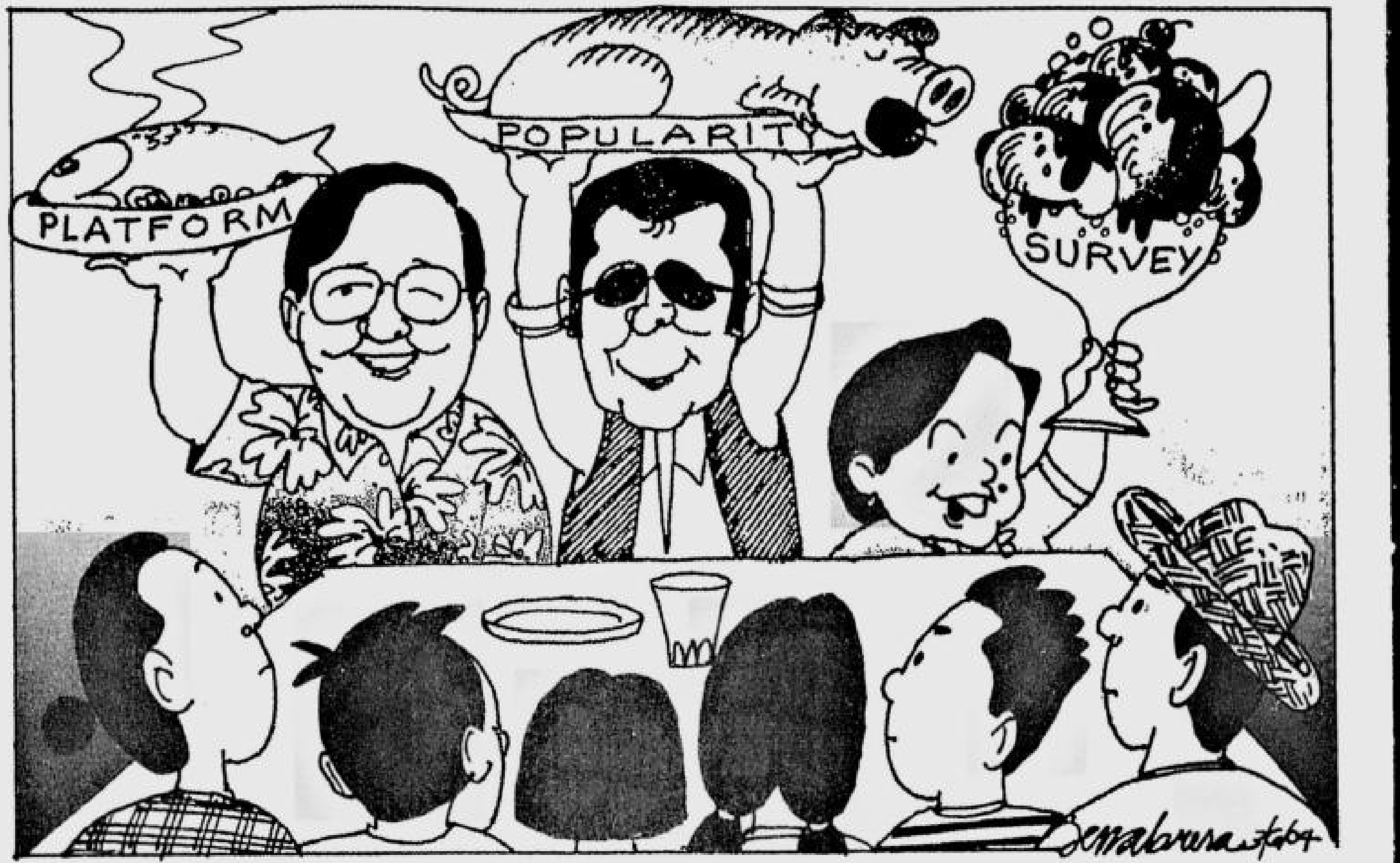
Anxiety

IT may be their continuing anxiety over the question of whether or not Poe is a natural-born citizen, which hangs like Damocles' sword over his head, that is making the dangerous minority that tried to condition the minds of the public to view the Supreme Court in a negative light, continue its dangerous agitation. But if it is foolhardy for Poe's opponents to want to file a new disqualification case after the elections, it is equally irresponsible and wrong for some of Poe's more virulent supporters to continue poisoning the minds of the population.

These were the people who egged on thuggish elements to march to the Supreme Court. They were the ones who tried, through statements and text messages, to convince the people that it would be natural to expect the Court to succumb to pressure from the administration. These are the same people who have proved unrepentant in the face of the Court's sticking to the law, as it must naturally do, and who continue to be skeptical about how the Supreme Court arrived at the decision it did. And yet the Court quite clearly stuck to its expected duty to limit its actions to what the Constitution allows it to do and the duties the Charter ordains for constitutional bodies, including the Comelec and the Court itself.

In the face of a ruling that allows him to run, and which offers him the prospect of election to the presidency, the burden remains on Poe to continue exercising the leadership he tried to exercise through his wife when she addressed his supporters in Plaza Miranda. It is incumbent on every citizen to insist on the integrity of the Supreme Court, and not grudgingly admit that it may, from time to time, transcend the sort of politically-motivated behavior one expects of the presidency and Congress. The Supreme Court neither requires, nor expects, public approval for what is decided in its chambers, which is why all Filipinos must accept its verdict regardless of whatever political convenience or lack of it the Court's decision entails.

There remains a dangerous band of troublemakers who claim to follow Poe, but who do not follow him when it counts, which is when he says he is trying to exercise responsible leadership. The continuing test, therefore, in this campaign, for Poe, is to prove he can control his own partisans.



Heroes for health

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THE DEPARTMENT of Health and Pfizer, the drug company, have launched a joint project that deserves public support. It is called Heroes for Health Award. It is especially significant in these anxious times when many parts of the world are threatened with new diseases that do not recognize national boundaries.

We have so far been spared the scourge of SARS that claimed thousands of lives in China and other countries, including Canada and the United States. The current avian flu has caused not only the death of a considerable number of people but also the slaughter of innocent animals found to be the carriers of the rampant virus. Fortunately, we have also escaped the havoc of this pestilence, but only for the present and maybe not for long. How soon we shall lose this immunity, which many countries with more careful precautions have lost, is anybody's guess.

Viewed against this international background, the Heroes for Health Award project should be welcomed by every person concerned with the promotion of the physical well being of our people. This should be a national objective. It should involve not only the sick and undernourished in our society but the healthy members as well. It should involve every person, citizens and foreigners no less, who have a stake in the protection of the country's health.

According to the sponsors of the project:

"There are many individuals in our country today who are involved in projects to help improve the health and quality of life of our countrymen, especially the poor and underserved sectors of society. The Department of Health and Pfizer have joined hands to honor these heroes of our times, and to help them continue and expand their projects.

"Through this award, the Department of Health and Pfizer also want to inspire other Filipinos to follow the example of these health heroes by supporting their projects or undertaking similar initiatives to bring health care to those with little or no access to much-needed health facilities and services."

Pfizer, which will provide the awards of P500,000 to each of the five Heroes for Health, for a total of P2.5 million, says:

"The award is being launched to commemorate Pfizer's 50th anniversary of operations in the Philippines. Pfizer reaffirms its commitment towards helping make Filipinos healthier and their quality of life better as it has been doing since 1954."

The nominees for the Heroes for Health award must be Filipino citizens "who have shown heroic qualities—devoting much of their time, effort and personal resources, giving up better income and physical comforts and willing to risk even their very lives, if need be, for the fulfillment of their mission to make a difference in the health situation of the poor."

The project of the awardees must have been ongoing for at least three years and must have helped improve the health and quality of life of many people, especially those with little or no access to health care. It can be conducted in the areas of, but not limited to, public and community healthcare, disease control and management, philanthropic or voluntary work, people empowerment, capacity building, advocacy and education."

Any individual or organization can make nominations for the award not later than April 30, 2004. Zonal screening shall be made in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, and no more than 30 nominees shall be chosen for a second screening in Manila. The 10 finalists selected from the second screening shall be further appraised through site visits, interviews with the nominees themselves, their colleagues, and members of the community where the project is being implemented.

The Heroes for Health shall be chosen by a board of judges composed of health, business and civic leaders in both the public and private sectors, and the awarding ceremonies shall be held in August 2004. The monetary award shall be divided equally between the individual awardees and their respective projects.

The sponsors Heroes for Health Award are hoping for the active support of all the people for this worthy project that shall not cost them a single centavo or require the disbursement of public funds. Pfizer shall pick up the tab and the DOH shall provide all administrative and technical assistance to make the Award a success.

Pfizer is a familiar name in this country for its efforts, by itself or in cooperation with the DOH, to make the benefits of modern medicine and pharmacology accessible to our people, including the underprivileged masses. The Heroes for Health Award is one more evidence of its continuing concern for the improvement of the nation's health through the combined efforts of the government, its citizenry, and civic-minded organizations motivated principally by the public interest.

Ordinary people like us can also help by more than clapping our hands. We can bring to the attention of the sponsors, for their consideration as possible Heroes for Health awardees, individuals working quietly, as befits their altruistic mission, for the improvement of the quality of life in our marginalized and underserved communities.

Like a movie

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

ROMY Manlapaz, who prefers to be referred to as a "retired UP professor" instead of as a mathematician/statistician par excellence, e-mailed me his reaction to last week's column ("Don't shoot the messenger"). He reminded me of a paper he wrote four years ago, entitled "The movie in Erap's mind," where he states that a survey is not a snap-shot, is not a photograph, but a movie—or during the course of the data-gathering for the survey, changes are occurring in the minds of the respondents and in the country. Hence, we need to analyze the variation of the variables with time, with **date of interview.**

Which is what he did with the Pulse Asia survey data. He undertook regression analyses to determine how the voters' preferences changed over the dates of the survey interviews: Jan. 17 and Feb. 20. He also graphed the results, and they are very illuminating.

The first set of regression analyses show that from Jan. 17 to around Feb. 1, Fernando Poe Jr. was leading President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. But on or about Feb. 2, they tied. From around Feb. 3 to Feb. 19, GMA was leading FPJ. On or about Feb. 20, they again tied.

Therefore, says Manlapaz, Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations were probably both correct in reporting that **during the period of their respective surveys,** GMA (or FPJ) was leading. Pulse Asia covered the period when GMA was leading; SWS, the period when FPJ was leading.

This should end, once and for all, the questions regarding methods and the doubts about the credibility of the two survey groups.

The graph tracking voters' preferences nationwide for the four top contenders over the period is sure to get them and their campaign managers into a "where-did-we-go-wrong" mode. It shows GMA initially decreasing slightly; subsequently increasing; peaking on Feb 11; and again decreasing. The curve of FPJ shows a continuous downward movement between Jan. 17 and Feb. 20. Raul Roco's curve is flat at 18 percent; while Panfilo Lacson's is the only one that ends up rising, after an initial decrease.

Manlapaz went through the same exercise by region—NCR, Northern Luzon, Southern Luzon and Mindanao—and again graphed the results. In Metro Manila, GMA's curve looks like a roller-coaster: it initially decreases (from 24 percent to 20 percent), then shows a continuous climb, peaking at about 40 percent on Feb. 10, and then nosedives over the next 10 days to less than 15 percent by Feb. 20. It looks like GMA and the Metro Manila voters are in a blow-hot-blow-cold relationship. One wonders (and this is where the political analysts come in) what caused that peak and that trough, and whether this has hit bottom and is about to rise, or will continue plunging. No wonder that in the United States, the major contenders conduct daily polls.

The curves of voters' preferences for FPJ and Roco in Metro Manila over time are similar: they are both flat, although FPJ's is at 34 percent while Roco's is at 20 percent during the entire period. Which would tend to mean that while these two candidates' supporters seem not to be wooed away, no new adherents are flocking to them either. Again, Lacson's curve is the only one that shows an increasing trend over the period. It actually looks like a very shallow soup bowl: his voter support first moves down from less than 15 percent to less than 10 percent and then rises to just below 20 percent by Feb. 20. This should warm the cockles of Ermin Garcia's heart.

In Northern Luzon, the shoe is on the other foot. GMA's and Lacson's curves are flat—invariant at 30 percent and 9 percent, respectively. It is FPJ's curve that looks like a roller-coaster, albeit a small one. It initially decreases, then increases, peaking around Feb. 13, and then decreases again, but the overall trend is downward. Roco is the only one that shows a rise at the end, after having initially increased, and then decreased.

Southern Luzon tells a different story. FPJ's curve is invariant throughout the period at 35 percent. GMA's initially increases, peaking on Feb. 1, then decreases, and increases near the end of the period. Lacson's, again, is generally increasing (although still the lowest). It is Roco's curve that goes on a roller-coaster, dropping drastically from 47 percent to 20 percent, then increasing slightly before finally increasing (but somewhere close to 15 percent).

In the Visayas, which everyone concedes to be GMA's bailiwick, one would have expected the voters' preferences for her to be invariant. This is not the case. Although she is generally far above everyone else, there is a decrease at the beginning of the period, followed by an increase, a peaking on Feb. 13, and then a decrease again. FPJ does not seem to be gaining ground either: his curve initially increases, peaks on Jan. 31, and then shows a continuous decline. Roco's curve remains invariant at 20 percent. Again, it is Lacson's curve that shows some little hope: it initially increases, peaks on Feb. 1, subsequently decreases, and then increases slightly.

And, finally, the Mindanao graph shows GMA's voter support continually increasing, with Lacson's invariant (at 9 percent). FPJ shows a continuous decrease, **but**—and this should create terror in some people's hearts—finally increases slightly. Roco's curve initially increases, peaks on Jan. 31, subsequently decreases, and finally increases again.

As Manlapaz says, a survey is like a movie. And at this point, there is no clue as to how it will finally end.

Noli to be GMA's 'bridge' to common folk

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo showed up in a red suit, every hair in place and makeup intact, at the INQUIRER last Thursday evening at 9 p.m. at the invitation of the editors, and stayed for two hours. If she had a rough day campaigning around Metro Manila, she didn't look it. Before going to the INQUIRER, she was in Muñoz Market in Quezon City to see the pork situation and conferred with Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo on how to address the pork vendors' gripes. At around 11 p.m., she stood up and was on her way to the 70th birthday celebration of a supporter who had helped her since her vice-presidential days. The editors and reporters looked quite beat up by that time, but GMA looked not the least bit tired at all, astounding everyone with her stamina.

* * *

The President gamely took on every question, friendly or a bit direct and even antagonistic. To editor in chief Letty Magsanoc's observation that she has been smiling "differently" these days possibly because of the campaign, GMA retorted, "Maybe it's just that I wasn't smiling as often before." She explained that she has to smile to greet the people while campaigning, but that she can't smile when tackling tough issues with other officials. As editors, columnists and reporters shot all sorts of questions to her, what emerged was a chief executive who seemed to have her fingers in every nook and cranny of her administration. No detail seemed too small to merit her attention.

* * *

Once in a while the old *taray* surfaced, but it's restrained and often laced with a smile. Such as when there were observations that First Gentleman Mike Arroyo seemed to be making himself scarce these days. Was it by mutual agreement? she was asked. GMA replied that it's better that way since Mike A. has been the "favorite whipping boy of all my opponents." But she pointed out that they have really not gone together during campaigns, except during her Senate run when they did the boogie on stage to be noticed. Nowadays, Mike pursues his own thing, meeting people separately. A reporter asked her to comment on a critic's admonition that she divorce her husband. GMA replied: "What God has put together, let no man put asunder. I'd rather follow God than my enemies."

* * *

Queried on her support for a shift to a parliamentary/federal system, GMA said she would submit an administrative measure to Congress to act on it early in her new term. But between the parliamentary and federalism concepts, she considers federalism "more important" since it is "very difficult" to administer Mindanao in our archipelago. She recalled that as a senator she authored a bill creating the Mindanao Authority but this was not passed by Congress. Now she's not waiting for that concept to be fleshed out. Secretary Lorenzo is moving his headquarters to Zamboanga City.

* * *

The President stressed that she preferred a parliamentary/federal setup because there is "so much gridlock" between the executive and the legislature in a centralized, presidential system. She recalled that when she was in the Senate, senators who ran as the President's allies would consider themselves "independent" once they got elected.

By way of contrast, she recalled how the other year, when MILF chief Nur Misuari was detained in Malaysia, she called up Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to ask him to continue holding him there, pending the swearing in of new ARMM governor Parouk Hussin since she wanted that event to go without a hitch. Mahathir said he would consult his Cabinet about detaining Misuari beyond the time allotted by law. GMA confessed she was intrigued that the Malaysian strongman would "consult" his Cabinet, until she remembered that his Cabinet members were also from the legislature. Here, she said, by contrast, to relax the application of a law, one needed a resolution from Congress, but this is like passing a new law with all the attendant difficulties.

Perhaps more significant was her assertion that if we have a parliamentary form, "we don't need an Edsa" since the people could change the leadership anytime they lose their confidence in it. But wouldn't that be more destabilizing since there would be frequent upheavals? She felt confident that people would mature politically.

* * *

She spoke, perhaps for the first time in the media, about the role she envisions for her running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, who seems to have practically nailed down that post with his seemingly insurmountable lead over rival Loren Legarda. GMA says "Kabayan" is "a very good communicator" and she is utilizing this asset in their "townhall approach" to the campaign, where instead of full-blown rallies in various places, they meet with local officials and media and De Castro raises issues with her to start a dialogue. GMA sees her running mate as a "bridge between the people and the President" because of his common touch. This is a role that "he defined for himself," she said.

* * *

Asked why she put *artistas* in her senatorial lineup whereas she is critical of the inexperience of her chief rival FPJ, GMA seemed stung. She retorted that in the first place, Bong Revilla and Lito Lapid were the choice of a search committee, just like the two new Comelec commissioners. Moreover, she said, they're not just *artistas*, but also governors (of Cavite and Pampanga, respectively) who are "experienced administrators." Lapid is governor of one of the five most progressive provinces and he oversaw Pampanga in its most difficult period, the lahar devastation. Moreover, said GMA, businessmen in Pampanga like Lapid because he "never meddles in their business and observes the laissez-faire policy." But some INQUIRER staffers were unimpressed because they feel Senate work is mostly cerebral, which the two actor-politicians are not.

The people have spoken

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

CANDIDATES who are afraid to speak out and in detail on the issues of population and reproductive health, including family planning, would do well to take a look at the findings of the February 2004 Pulse Asia "Ulat ng Bayan" survey on population and family planning.

Some 1,800 respondents, 18 years old and above, were asked if they consider family planning an important matter. Asked to respond to the question, "In your view, is it important or not important to have the ability to control your fertility or plan your family? This does not include abortion," a whopping 97 percent of respondents said it was important to them. This widespread support is expressed across all geographical areas and socio-economic classifications, with 98 percent of "ABC," 97 percent of "D" and 97 percent of "E" saying it was important.

Asked if they thought a "fast increasing Philippine population hinders development," 71 percent of all respondents said they agree with the statement.

Even more interesting, especially for candidates, is the opinion expressed by 82 percent of all respondents, that candidates who are in favor of the free choice of family planning methods by couples should be supported. This is a huge jump from the findings of a survey conducted by Pulse Asia in 2000, where 69 percent of respondents said they would support candidates supportive of family planning. But even then, said Prof. Anna L. Tabunda, executive director of Pulse Asia, voter support for candidates who are in favor of family planning programs has been pretty consistent through the years.

Then why are so many candidates and officials still so scared to speak out?

Rep. Krisel Lagman-Luistro, board treasurer of the Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), which sponsored the press conference on the survey findings, says she believes it's because such findings are not publicized enough. "*Hindi nakaka-abot sa* politicians *ang mga report na ito* (These reports do not reach politicians)," she remarked.

* * *

UNSAID but implicit in the discussions was the power to intimidate politicians wielded by those opposing any population policy or family planning program. We know who these usual suspects are, and while we grant bishops, priests and conservative elements of the Church the right to assert their beliefs, we wonder why politicians allow themselves to be so intimidated. As Lagman-Luistro declared: "It's crystal clear. Across all sectors, regardless of class, gender or even religion, Filipino voters consider family planning and reproductive health to be vital issues."

And yet this fact doesn't seem to have sunk into the minds and awareness of our politicians. At the merest hint of ecclesiastical disapproval, for instance, legislators who eagerly signed on as sponsors of the reproductive health care bill started to turn tail and withdrew their support.

Lagman-Luistro knows this first-hand. Along with the other legislators and PLCPD members who persisted in pushing for the reproductive health bill, she was personally attacked by Catholic leaders in her province. She has decided not to run for a third term, opting for a fellowship abroad, but one wonders if the personal attacks had not somehow dampened her appetite for electoral politics.

Another bill supporter had to endure daily pickets by Catholic lay organizations in front of her residence. Another legislator, a most promising and progressive representative, is now busy fending off malicious and baseless charges of graft and corruption, with his opponents enjoying the support of the local hierarchy.

* * *

LAST week, I took part in a panel on "Legislating for Reproductive Health" as part of the national convention of the provincial board members league.

A board member of a Mindanao province proudly declared that she had initiated a resolution condemning the reproductive health care bill as "unconstitutional and immoral." When asked if she had consulted all sectors, especially women, before filing the resolution, she said she had filed it after attending a seminar during which the bill was condemned. When asked if she had read the bill, she said she had not, relying on the information and interpretation provided by her parish priest.

In the course of our discussion, it turned out that she, and many other board members it seems, didn't have a clear idea of how so-called "abortifacient" contraceptives worked. For indeed, how could the pill cause an abortion when it precisely prevents ovulation?

So it isn't just a question of the Church's power to intimidate. Population and reproductive health policy in this country is stuck in the Middle Ages mainly because many of our legislators and policymakers at the national and local levels often fail to do their homework, and feel comfortable imposing their own religious and moral beliefs on the populace. Even if, as the Pulse Asia survey findings prove, public opinion is diametrically opposite theirs.

* * *

THE BRIGHT side of the picture is that legislators of the caliber and mettle of Krisel Lagman-Luistro are gaining in power and influence.

Though the reproductive health care bill fell victim to a "Kill Bill" scenario, it's remarkable that the effort lasted as long as it did, and the number of steadfast supporters in the House and Senate remained fairly respectable.

The battle is joined, as Gandalf might have told the forces of good. But the fellowship of repro rights can rest easy in the thought that on this issue, at least, they have the support of the Filipino people.

Taal once more

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

FIRST it was that giant nipple passing itself off as a bell tower on the roof of the basilica of St. Martin de Tours. Snidely called "Evenflow" by some townspeople, it mimics some kind of Anita Ekberg effluence—but in poured concrete, which is disastrously acidic for the coral stones of the church. That cool P1 million National Historical Institute extravaganza that caused cracks in the structure and sent debris falling on churchgoers resulted in another calamitous solution. Not having another million pesos to correct the eyesore, the NHI forthwith constructed aluminum and plastic awnings leading to the doors to protect the public or at least prevent a law suit by an irate parishioner with a *bukol* on his head.

Not content with the mayhem, the parish priest, a bishop at that, decided to get into the act. Let's start by stating that no one can quarrel with the construction of an adoration chapel, especially in a country that's 87.4 percent Catholic, at least on Sundays for 45 minutes, some holidays of obligation and, okay, on deathbeds too. Unfortunately the structure (of hollow blocks, what else?) is right smack beside the right side of the church, blocking the ventilation and light from the interiors of the church and convent.

Members of the Taal Charm Foundation Inc., Blessed Virgin of Caysasay Foundation Inc. (BVCFI), Taal Heritage Foundation Inc. (THFI), leaders of the community and residents have written to NHI chair Ambeth Ocampo, to Bishop Leopoldo Tumulak, chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Permanent Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, Fr. Ted Torralba, Most Rev. Gaudencio Rosales, NHI executive director Ludovico Badoy and Ricky Jose, chair of monuments and sites of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. They have even presented 15 pages of signatures. Needless to say, like everything else in this country, it didn't work. (You do know that that is the one constant around here).

Well, Badoy did send an inspection team in response to the complaints of Dindo Montenegro, but naturally they were unable to meet with Bishop Jose Salazar, the parish priest. Ocampo also wrote to the good bishop and sent proposals but met the usual stonewalling. The NHI's proposals were based on the premise that the most logical solution (cheaper, too) would be to use a room on the ground floor of the convent or part of the sacristy unless the bishop expects a battalion to visit the chapel daily. The other scheme involved using the space on the left side of the church which would not block ventilation or light. As I said, the lot of them could just as well have been talking to themselves since the bishop chose to ignore them. Talk about arrogance.

Supposedly the Taal Basilica is governed by PD 1505, which governs National Historical Landmarks. It states that "any alteration or modification in a declared historic site" has to be made after consultation with the chair of the NHI in order to ensure that "conservation standards and principles" are observed. Granted that the NHI doesn't exactly have this sterling record, still it's the law. The problem here (and I grant you I'm guessing) is that the good bishop cum parish priest may feel that since the basilica is Church property, no one can stop him, especially not some silly civil authority. Now, why am I reminded of Martin Luther trying to get Rome to listen?

That comparison may sound farfetched to you, but if I'm not mistaken Vatican II stated something about the Church being the people of the community. It appears that one of the concerned parishioners did try to obtain or to see a copy of the architectural plan but was told "the plan as requested was not available." It may be that the issue revolves around the question: Whose basilica is it anyway? Does it belong to the Taaleños (their ancestors having built it) or to the Filipino people or only to the institutional Catholic Church?

The prevailing idea behind this, of course, is that long after Bishop Salazar is gone as well as Dindo and Ambeth and Ricky and all of us for that matter, that basilica of coral stone will still stand as a symbol of the Filipino's faith and as their heritage. It seems rather unfair that one man, bishop or no bishop, can decide that he can change the lay-out and configuration of a building that is more than a century old, use cement with all the acid that is detrimental to coral stone, and totally ignore anybody who doesn't agree. This being the season of Lent, one would have expected a little more humility from a man of the cloth. However, we have to consider that this is the Philippines —backwards and feudal.

Such cavalier attitude toward Filipino heritage of the Catholic Church in the Philippines is truly painful. You've got the parish priest of Miagao who decided he needed a bigger sacristy in a church adjudged a World Heritage by Unesco and so added a hollow block room attached to the church with a crenellated roof, or another parish priest who decided to lease out an area beside the church to McDonald's. I imagine his reasoning was that he needed the money. He was after all diocesan and didn't belong to an order that would support him in his old age.

But that's not the point. The point is, what is heritage and what does it mean to us, if anything. Judging by the events these past years, heritage doesn't mean diddly squat.

Celebrating excesses

YOUNG BLOOD

Portia M. Villanueva

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

NOTHING beats being Pinoy. Walk one day in my *tsinelas* and understand the beautiful, oftentimes strange excesses and quirks that I indulge in. After all, we are of a race that laughs as much as we eat and sleep. Ours is a country with an eight-month long Christmas season. We overload on the romance (and you wonder why Jolina and Marvin are doing so well?). We overload on the family traditions. Heck, we overload jeepneys! And there is hardly a day when we find ourselves incapable of celebrating the mere joy of just being a Filipino.

And yes, you're also glad you've survived another day of traffic.

We are a strong people, I believe. Melded together by centuries of laughter and warmth and fused by generations of friendship and unshaken bonds, we all take joy in just being alive. Never mind if we're being hit by earthquakes and unspeakable natural horrors, the fiesta must go on! Never mind the financial crisis, it's nothing tons of prayers (and months of belt-tightening) won't solve.

Any foreigner who knows life to be a rat race would be appalled by such complacence, yet the Philippines has one of the lowest suicide rates in the whole world. We're a lot happier. We may be a lot of other things, but we're happy.

Underneath the eternal optimism lies the creative and individual dream. The Filipino has substance. The youth nowadays face computer screens instead of homely abacus beads, a sign that this day and age call for intelligence and that ingenious spark which can be often found in the Filipino student. They have reason to stand tall. The condition of a country's people cannot be captured by statistics or computed in dollars. While it is true we aren't doing as well as expected, we can count on our inner strength to carry us through every crisis.

Like I said, nothing beats being Pinoy. Glory be to our excesses, for without them, we wouldn't have much of character.

Somebody said that too much of a good thing is bad, but then most probably that person didn't know the Filipino. So then get out of my *tsinelas*, buddy, and let's go grab some *taho*.

Desert rain

BEING hopelessly hooked on analogies, I would describe my grandmother as a desert rain. She is perhaps the best thing since the invention of post-its, and she comes in a greater variety of colors.

My Lola used to be an English teacher and a college dean. I can still remember watching her fingers fly over a typewriter keyboard with lightning speed. She would play Scrabble with me before bedtime and put to shame some people who put out small dictionaries.

There was a time when I thought she was a supernatural being. She seemed to exude sense, wisdom and warmth all at the same time.

One time I felt very heart-broken. The cause of it was a horrible, painful crime committed by my best friend. She meant the world to me, but on that occasion she made me realize that the world was cruel after all. In the soap opera that is our lives, Lola soothed my aches. She showed me the sunshine streaming through open doors of opportunity.

"Darling," she told me me, "don't try too hard to be happy, it makes it so much harder. Our pain is very real, but look at the many things to be thankful for!"

And there were!

Such faith in the goodness of life gives me most of my strength. The shallow, the superficial and the ephemeral—they will come and go, like gritty sand particles that get into your eyes every now and then. Then the choice is ours to make whether to let the sand blind us or wipe it off and continue on our way.

There are few phenomenal women, I believe, and my Lola is one of them. At 74, she wakes up at four in the morning daily to prepare to play a set of tennis with my grandfather. She still works as general secretary of the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia, which provides her opportunities to travel three times a year. And she stills beats me at Scrabble!

The cat's red hat

IT all began with the silly cat's red hat. Reading was something essential for me while I was growing up, something as vital as breathing and flossing. Ransacking the shelves of our house was an afternoon pastime, and I grew intimate with Cinderella and Sherlock Holmes.

I grew up in a household where learning is highly valued. My grandfather tried to teach me simple division when I turned 4 and my hobby was transforming empty shampoo bottles into flower vases. School was more of a mental playground than an academic institution, and before long, I found myself immersed in activities that involved jet lag and considerable skills in diplomacy.

Through some school programs undertaken by non-government organizations like Peace Child International (based in the United Kingdom), I got to travel to places such as England and Switzerland to work on books and attend conferences on the environment and children's rights.

Work wasn't always easy for the 11-year-old that I was. I could not count on coffee to ease the stress of deadlines and dull the effects of a harsh weather. But those experiences were perhaps the best of my life! I got to edit two books for the United Nations along with other young people. Aside from this, I was able to address people, children, ambassadors and government officials on pressing global issues.

My participation in such activities was a huge departure from my world of books and wonder. But it gave me a view of the world beyond ous. Working with people who have a mission inspired me to speak out and dare to change things.

Portia M. Villanueva was 16 and a high school senior when she wrote these essays in 1998. She died in an accident a few months before her graduation.

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How about rainwater harvesting in Manila?

THE PHILIPPINE Watershed Management Coalition (PWMC), would like to respond to the problem of critical water supply at the Angat Dam. We would like to suggest the adoption of rainwater harvesting in Metro Manila as an alternative water source and a strategy for water demand management.

The PWMC has just concluded its second national conference on rainwater catchment systems and one of the important discussions in the conference is the impact of the use of rainwater harvesting to manage water demand. During the conference, it was learned that 40 percent of household water consumption is used for drinking, cooking and bathing while 60 percent is for cleaning, flushing toilets, gardening and other uses that need not have that water quality needed for human consumption. Translated into Metro Manila's water situation, 60 percent of its water demand has the potential to be sourced out from an alternative water supply source such as rainwater. This also means that even with the lowering level of water in Angat Dam, Manila will have a buffer supply of water with proper rainwater catchment systems management. The farmers too need not depend solely on the dam. They could have their own rainwater catchment systems on their farm, too.

The 3rd World Water Forum Session on Rainwater Harvesting has considered rainwater as a major supply option for fresh water. UNEP has declared rainwater harvesting as an ecologically sound way of managing water. China has considered rainwater harvesting as its central strategy for poverty alleviation. Taiwan has placed rainwater harvesting in its policy for mitigating flood. Japan's cities, particularly Tokyo, adopted rainwater for flood and drainage management. Many European countries require new building constructions to include rainwater cisterns. Australia has led other countries in offering tax rebates and other incentives to rainwater catchment systems owners, and African countries are noted for their programs in food security linked to rainwater harvesting.

It is time for the Philippines and its cities to recognize the intrinsic value of water demand management. Rainwater harvesting is the technology to deliver such a value change.

—JESSICA CALFOFORO SALAS,
president,
Philippine Watershed
Management Coalition,
c/o Kahublagan Sang Panimalay
Foundation Inc.,
25B Magsaysay Village,
La Paz, Iloilo City

LETTERS

No politics in celebration of the Mass

THIS is regarding my homily in Our Lady of Manaoag Church last Feb. 21, 2004 when President Macapagal-Arroyo attended the usual ordinary 9 a.m. Mass. I was informed that she was coming without her usual political entourage except for Sen. Noli de Castro. We celebrated the Holy Mass the usual way and knowing that she was there just to attend the Holy Mass, we gave her the usual convention we provide to other high officials of the government.

Regarding my homily, I want to clarify things:

1. I precisely stuck to the Gospel message of the day, i.e., the Messiah must not only undergo transfiguration to prove that the prophecies are fulfilled in Him, but he must also bear the pain, the wounds and suffering for man's sins. Like Jesus, a president of any country, to become a liberator of his people, must make the supreme act of sacrificing himself to serve others and to maintain peace among his people. Unless he does this, he will fail as a president.

2. He must be filled with faith in God and prayers in his life.

3. These make up the way to be a "messiah": complete trust in the Lord, prayerful servanthood and most of all, supreme sacrifice of one's self for others.

4. I have never endorsed anyone during my Masses. I would never endorse any politician directly or indirectly during the Eucharistic Feast because the Holy Mass is not the proper forum. I must admit I asked all to pray for the President. And this is not, in any way directly or indirectly, an endorsement. I feel that this should be understood clearly.

I did not ask to celebrate the Mass that morning for the President. I was assigned by my superior and was obliged out of obedience. Aware of past experiences, I made it a point to be careful with what I said and did during the Mass, knowing how I could be misinterpreted as being political by some media practitioners. Politics is the staple food of politicians. Priests definitely have another kind of staple food, and that is Jesus and His poor. We should not wallow in partisan politics or politics at all. I am for God and I'll stay loyal to God alone. No more, no less.

—FR. SONNY RAMIREZ, OP,
Manaoag, Pangasinan

Tame runaway parking fees

OWNERS of motor vehicles have time and again appealed to the owners of shopping malls to provide free parking for their customers. Instead of heeding their request, the mall owners kept on increasing the parking fees.

They are now charging exorbitantly—at P40 inside parking buildings and P30 in open space regardless of how short a time the vehicle will be parked. Hence, if a person was going to the mall even for a few minutes to pick up a sign pen costing only P45, it would cost him an additional P30 to P40.

Mall owners should charge parking fees based on the length of time a vehicle was parked.

For example:
P40— 4-hour parking
P30—3-hour parking
P20—2-hour parking
P10—up to 1 hour parking

What if the mall owners refuse to adjust the rates or continue to raise the parking fees? Then the city government should intervene by imposing additional taxes on revenue from parking fees exceeding P25 to compel them to comply.

—L. ENCHONG SEE,
enchong@eudoramail.com

After world kissing record, what next?

LAST FEB. 13, 2004, the Philippines once again bagged a "first." Or to be exact, outdid last year's "World Kissing Capital," the Chilean capital of Santiago, with the most number of couples simultaneously kissing in one area. Last year Santiago gathered 4,500 kissing couples. Manila bested this feat with a record 5,122 smooching couples in Luneta. I knew Mayor Lito Atienza to be "pro-life." This must be one of his effective ways of promoting sex, ah, life, that is!

Now that Manila is the "World Kissing Capital" of 2004, what's next? Long before public kissing became common in many countries, other practices were already quite common abroad like live-in relationships. Are we going to enlist Manila in a contest for the city with the most "live-in couples"?

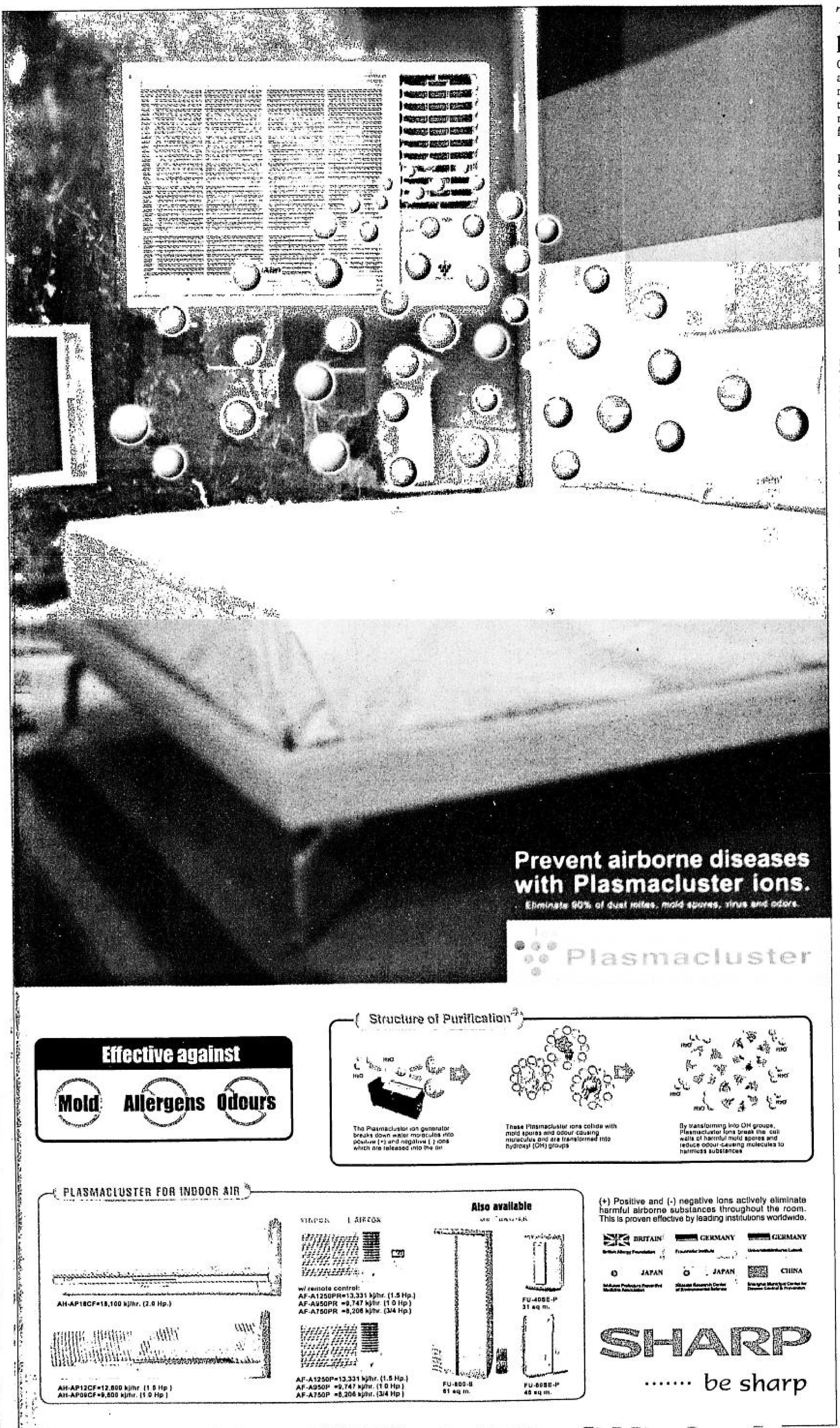
"PDA" or public display of affection has long ceased to be an issue in some schools. When I was a parish priest and chaplain in the University of the Philippines, I saw the gradual deterioration of morality. "What's wrong with a kiss?" I've often been asked by many a spontaneous and candid youth. Before I could say anything, some were quick to add, "and so what's wrong with necking, petting and going all the way if the couple loves one another?"

The problem is "amorality" or an environment without morals or moral sensibilities. Well, these days we have gotten used to certain compatibilities like media and politics, business and politics, government and corruption; and incompatibilities like politics and morality. Little wonder there is no fuss over 5,122 couples kissing in public whether married or not. Or is this question completely irrelevant in an amoral world?

Are there plans to defend this "Kissing Capital" title next year against our Southeast Asian neighbors? But I doubt whether Indonesia, Malaysia or Brunei would jump to the challenge. My religious and cultural intuition about Muslims is that the more intimate expressions of love and affection are better kept within the seclusion of the bedroom. I had to check with one of my close Muslim couple friends Taha and Ann Basman. This was Taha's reply, "There are other records that we can be proud of. For instance, why not the longest religious (prayer) procession, Catholic or otherwise? How about the biggest number of people gathered to fast for the longest time for peace in the world?" Thank you Taha and Ann for assuring me that my queasiness is not isolated.

I wonder what Mayor Atienza wanted to convey to the young? That couples who kiss in public stick together? I know Fr. Patrick Peyton said something with a similar ring, but he was talking of families praying (the rosary) and consecrating themselves to God in the privacy of their homes, not kissing in public.

—FR. ROBERTO P. REYES,
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish,
Camerino cor Legaspi Sts.,
Project 4, Quezon City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Foresters arm themselves to fight illegal logging

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has armed its foresters in Nueva Ecija following near-violent attacks by hired goons of illegal loggers resisting the seizures of hot lumber in the upland boundaries of the province and Bulacan.

The Commission on Elections had exempted at least 10 short firearms that were issued to the foresters from the election gun ban, according to Regidor de Leon, DENR Central Luzon executive director.

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These were not enough for the 37 foresters protecting the already thinning forests of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range in General Tinio in Nueva Ecija and Doña Remedios Trinidad in Bulacan, De Leon told the INQUIRER on Monday.

Tense

To make up for the lack of firepower and to continue the follow-up operations amid the "tense situation" in Barangay Rio Chico, the police's 309th Mobile Group lent security, enabling the DENR team to recover and burn at least 12,781 board feet of illegal lumber on Feb. 20 and 56,225 board feet on Feb. 21.

The illegal timber cargo are estimated to cost P1.4 million. The DENR team trailed these cargo last Feb. 10 but more than 50 men armed with guns and bolos thwarted the confiscation by firing on the foresters.

"The area is financed by several financiers as indicated by several roads and traces of chainsaw-cut lumber different from other areas. Their operations are destructive, affecting also the residuals and other vegetation in the area and the flow of water along Rio Chico," provincial environment officer Rafael Otic said in a report here on Monday.

He said that if no actions were immediately taken, the deforestation in General Tinio town may "result in the loss of wildlife species and (the) biodiversity of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range."

Biodiversity

To stop timber poaching, Otic recommended the implementation of an alternative livelihood program for the residents dependent on forest resources and a crackdown on big-time financiers and illegal cutters by sustaining the anti-logging operations.

He also recommended the amendment of the Forest Code by upgrading the penalty for illegal logging to life imprisonment for both illegal cutters and financiers. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Teachers threaten to boycott poll duty over unpaid benefits

COTABATO CITY—Public schoolteachers in Maguindanao threatened not to serve in the May elections if the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao would not attend to their grievances, a school official said.

To prevent this from happening, Udtog Kawit, Maguindanao schools division superintendent, asked Speaker Esmael Abubakar of the ARMM's Regional Legislative Assembly to look into their plight.

According to Kawit, public schoolteachers in Maguindanao are continuously being denied of their privilege to avail of salary loans from the Government Service Insurance System, a manifestation of DepEd-ARMM's continued failure to remit premiums.

This came despite a commitment from ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin that he would personally address the non-remittance of GSIS premiums. Hussin, who is running for senator under the President's party, is serving as DepEd-ARMM acting regional secretary in a concurrent capacity.

Hussin also promised to delegate the authority to sign teachers' appointments to schools division superintendents "to remedy unwarranted delays in the process."

However, these commitments are yet to be enforced, according to Kawit.

"Worse, the authority to sign teachers' appointments has been temporarily delegated to an official already overloaded with functions," he said.

Kawit was referring to Leovigilda Cinches, DepEd-ARMM director for administration, finance and support services bureau. She is also the designated DepEd-ARMM's liaison officer to the IBM and DBM.

"I have nothing against Ms Cinches but giving her an additional work, particularly on matters that need ample time, will only exacerbate the very poor performance of our department, considering her voluminous functions," Kawit said.

Basilan Assemblyman Harisul Sabanol also expressed alarm over the state of affairs of DepEd-ARMM.

He said the RLA, the region's lawmaking body, has agreed to act as committee of the whole to investigate what he described as disturbing problems public schoolteachers are facing.

"In Basilan, many public schoolteachers serving as early as 2000 have no appointments for reasons still unknown to them," he said.

Some of them received their appointments this year and their payments only started in January 2004. "What about the services they rendered since 2000?" Sabanol asked.

On March 9, RLA would hold the first public hearing on the teachers' complaint.

Fighting for his teachers, Kawit reiterated that he and the teachers are not disputing the "executive discretion" of Hussin to name people of his choice to run the affairs of DepEd-ARMM.

"We have no problem as long as it is done in a very objective manner, as long as the interest and welfare of our people are not sacrificed," he added. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Village execs get money in 'seminar' with ex-DOJ chief

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LIPA CITY—This election campaign season, barangay officials are the apple of the candidates' eyes as they enjoy the junkets and out-of-town trips that could be disguised as seminars that come with pockets full of "graces" from the candidates.

But even the numerous seminar and conference halls that abound in the city were not patronized by the seminar facilitators, as the election season-timed seminars for barangay officials were conducted in Baguio City.

One of those junkets has just been enjoyed by 554 of Lipa's barangay officials in a four-day Balik-Aral seminar that took them to as far as Baguio from Feb. 27 to March 1.

"But it was not really a seminar. We only had a lecture for about one and half hours on the duties and responsibilities of the barangay officials, which we already know, and the rest of the four-day affair were spent on listening to Lakas-NUCD's candidates who had speeches after speeches that we had also heard before, then we played *tong-its* (card games) inside our rooms, then we strolled around Baguio," a barangay captain who attended the seminar said.

The barangay captain, who talked to the INQUIRER on condition of anonymity, said the seminar turned out to be like a "meeting de avance" of administration candidates who were not all invited by the facilitators of the seminar.

Spending a whooping P2 million on the barangay officials for the four-day affair, as every participant had a budget of P3,650, the source said the seminar could have been a lot cheaper if it was held in Lipa City, Batangas City or the towns of Nasugbu and Lemery where facilities that can accommodate them abound.

"Ex-justice secretary Nani Perez was there, Sen. Ralph Recto and Mayor Vilma (Santos), and all the other Lakas candidates where there—even the councilors, incumbent and wannabes who were asking for our support in the May elections," the barangay captain said.

"You know, this election, we barangay captains can have as much as 200 command votes in our barangay, plus the volunteered votes. That's why the candidates are wooing us."

The INQUIRER source added that after the meeting and the speeches by candidates, they shook hands with the participants and received envelopes with money inside.

But according to Liga ng Barangay president Romulo de la Peña, the seminar was something that the barangay officials need.

"It's a necessity for barangay officials because the seminar was about our duties and responsibilities," De la Peña said, "and we decided to do it in Baguio because it was the consensus of the members, most of whom, have not even been to the City of Pines yet."

Nabbed MILF man in bomb attack linked to kidnaps

THE ANTI-KIDNAPPING effort's ups and downs. Anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes carries a rescued kidnapping victim with Chinese community leader Teresita Ang See beside them in a recent meeting at the headquarters of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force. In Mindanao, kidnappings have yet to be stopped, however. PHOTO FROM NAKTF

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commander who was arrested outside a shopping mall in Koronadal City for possession of explosives and firearms was also involved in the kidnapping of a South Korean national and Filipino businessman in General Santos City two years ago, police said.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, Central Mindanao police director, told a local radio station here that Abdulrahman Bedis admitted that the leader of the Abu Sufia gang, which took Jae Kwon Yon and Carlos Belonio in 2001, is his brother.

"We also dispatched a team to Palimbang town (in Sultan Kudarat) to confirm his reported link to the kidnap gang and it turned positive," Billones said.

He did not specify the exact participation of the MILF leader in the kidnapping.

Billones said Bedis, who joined the MILF in 1993, was also the main suspect in the bomb attack in Datu Piang, Maguindanao on Dec. 25, 2002 that killed 13 people, including Mayor Saudi Ampatuan.

The MILF admitted that Bedis is a ranking member but said he has been under investigation for his involvement in crime.

"Our central committee is also investigating his involvement in the case of Jae because we also receive the same feedback," Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said.

Bedis was arrested with his escort, Acmad Dali, inside Casa Gemma, a restaurant in front of the KCC mall in Koronadal City. *Rosa-May de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

2 bandits killed, 4 Marines hurt in clash

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Four Marines were wounded while two suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed in an encounter in Barangay Pansul, Patikul, Sulu yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, the 3rd Marine Brigade commander, told the INQUIRER that the fighting, which started at 8 a.m., continued as of 3 p.m. yesterday.

The bandits, he said, belonged to the Abu Sayyaf faction led by Radulan Sahiron alias Commander Putol.

The wounded soldiers were brought to the Camp Asturias Hospital in the capital town of Jolo.

But Allaga admitted that they had difficulty in retrieving the wounded soldiers "because the Abu Sayyaf kept on firing on our helicopters."

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapching, 104th Army Brigade commander, said they had to use a military vehicle to get wounded soldiers because "the helicopters' pilots were unable to complete the extraction as one of the choppers was bombarded by the bandits during the clash."

The encounter happened while the civilian informant who was allegedly responsible for the capture of Ghalib Andang alias Commander Robot, another Abu Sayyaf leader, received his reward money of P550,000 from the US defense department.

The same informant received P1 million from the Office of the President through Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita last week.

The turn-over of the reward money was done secretly for security reasons.

Andang was captured in Indanan, Sulu on Dec. 7 last year. He was brought to Manila where his leg, which was wounded in a clash with government soldiers, was amputated.

In another front, New People's Army rebels ambushed a team of government troopers conducting patrol in a remote village of Koronadal City on Thursday evening.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, commander of the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade, said the government troops fought back, triggering a brief clash with the rebels.

Yano said an Army sergeant was killed while six militiamen were wounded during the clash in Sitio Bong-it in Barangay Gacub.

He said the military believes some rebels had either been killed or wounded during the 10-minute gunfire that started past 9 p.m.

Yano identified the fatality as T/Sgt. Uldarico Kamarista of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion but under the operational control of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion based in Tupi town, South Cotabato. *Julie Alipala and Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Some of them received their appointments this year and their payments only started in January 2004. "What about the services they rendered since 2000?" Sabanol asked.

On March 9, RLA would hold the first public hearing on the teachers' complaint.

Fighting for his teachers, Kawit reiterated that he and the teachers are not disputing the "executive discretion" of Hussin to name people of his choice to run the affairs of DepEd-ARMM.

"We have no problem as long as it is done in a very objective manner, as long as the interest and welfare of our people are not sacrificed," he added. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Village execs get money in 'seminar' with ex-DOJ chief

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LIPA CITY—This election campaign season, barangay officials are the apple of the candidates' eyes as they enjoy the junkets and out-of-town trips that could be disguised as seminars that come with pockets full of "graces" from the candidates.

But even the numerous seminar and conference halls that abound in the city were not patronized by the seminar facilitators, as the election season-timed seminars for barangay officials were conducted in Baguio City.

One of those junkets has just been enjoyed by 554 of Lipa's barangay officials in a four-day Balik-Aral seminar that took them to as far as Baguio from Feb. 27 to March 1.

"But it was not really a seminar. We only had a lecture for about one and half hours on the duties and responsibilities of the barangay officials, which we already know, and the rest of the four-day affair were spent on listening to Lakas-NUCD's candidates who had speeches after speeches that we had also heard before, then we played *tong-its* (card games) inside our rooms, then we strolled around Baguio," a barangay captain who attended the seminar said.

The barangay captain, who talked to the INQUIRER on condition of anonymity, said the seminar turned out to be like a "meeting de avance" of administration candidates who were not all invited by the facilitators of the seminar.

Spending a whooping P2 million on the barangay officials for the four-day affair, as every participant had a budget of P3,650, the source said the seminar could have been a lot cheaper if it was held in Lipa City, Batangas City or the towns of Nasugbu and Lemery where facilities that can accommodate them abound.

"Ex-justice secretary Nani Perez was there, Sen. Ralph Recto and Mayor Vilma (Santos), and all the other Lakas candidates where there—even the councilors, incumbent and wannabes who were asking for our support in the May elections," the barangay captain said.

"You know, this election, we barangay captains can have as much as 200 command votes in our barangay, plus the volunteered votes. That's why the candidates are wooing us."

The INQUIRER source added that after the meeting and the speeches by candidates, they shook hands with the participants and received envelopes with money inside.

But according to Liga ng Barangay president Romulo de la Peña, the seminar was something that the barangay officials need.

"It's a necessity for barangay officials because the seminar was about our duties and responsibilities," De la Peña said, "and we decided to do it in Baguio because it was the consensus of the members, most of whom, have not even been to the City of Pines yet."

Nabbed MILF man in bomb attack linked to kidnaps

THE ANTI-KIDNAPPING effort's ups and downs. Anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes carries a rescued kidnapping victim with Chinese community leader Teresita Ang See beside them in a recent meeting at the headquarters of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force. In Mindanao, kidnappings have yet to be stopped, however. PHOTO FROM NAKTF

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commander who was arrested outside a shopping mall in Koronadal City for possession of explosives and firearms was also involved in the kidnapping of a South Korean national and Filipino businessman in General Santos City two years ago, police said.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, Central Mindanao police director, told a local radio station here that Abdulrahman Bedis admitted that the leader of the Abu Sufia gang, which took Jae Kwon Yon and Carlos Belonio in 2001, is his brother.

"We also dispatched a team to Palimbang town (in Sultan Kudarat) to confirm his reported link to the kidnap gang and it turned positive," Billones said.

He did not specify the exact participation of the MILF leader in the kidnapping.

Billones said Bedis, who joined the MILF in 1993, was also the main suspect in the bomb attack in Datu Piang, Maguindanao on Dec. 25, 2002 that killed 13 people, including Mayor Saudi Ampatuan.

The MILF admitted that Bedis is a ranking member but said he has been under investigation for his involvement in crime.

"Our central committee is also investigating his involvement in the case of Jae because we also receive the same feedback," Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said.

Bedis was arrested with his escort, Acmad Dali, inside Casa Gemma, a restaurant in front of the KCC mall in Koronadal City. *Rosa-May de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

2 bandits killed, 4 Marines hurt in clash

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Four Marines were wounded while two suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed in an encounter in Barangay Pansul, Patikul, Sulu yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, the 3rd Marine Brigade commander, told the INQUIRER that the fighting, which started at 8 a.m., continued as of 3 p.m. yesterday.

The bandits, he said, belonged to the Abu Sayyaf faction led by Radulan Sahiron alias Commander Putol.

The wounded soldiers were brought to the Camp Asturias Hospital in the capital town of Jolo.

But Allaga admitted that they had difficulty in retrieving the wounded soldiers "because the Abu Sayyaf kept on firing on our helicopters."

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapching, 104th Army Brigade commander, said they had to use a military vehicle to get wounded soldiers because "the helicopters' pilots were unable to complete the extraction as one of the choppers was bombarded by the bandits during the clash."

The encounter happened while the civilian informant who was allegedly responsible for the capture of Ghalib Andang alias Commander Robot, another Abu Sayyaf leader, received his reward money of P550,000 from the US defense department.

The same informant received P1 million from the Office of the President through Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita last week.

The turn-over of the reward money was done secretly for security reasons.

Andang was captured in Indanan, Sulu on Dec. 7 last year. He was brought to Manila where his leg, which was wounded in a clash with government soldiers, was amputated.

In another front, New People's Army rebels ambushed a team of government troopers conducting patrol in a remote village of Koronadal City on Thursday evening.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, commander of the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade, said the government troops fought back, triggering a brief clash with the rebels.

Yano said an Army sergeant was killed while six militiamen were wounded during the clash in Sitio Bong-it in Barangay Gacub.

He said the military believes some rebels had either been killed or wounded during the 10-minute gunfire that started past 9 p.m.

Yano identified the fatality as T/Sgt. Uldarico Kamarista of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion but under the operational control of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion based in Tupi town, South Cotabato. *Julie Alipala and Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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INQUIRER Visayas

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

The struggle to get the 'V' on stage

By Ian Rosales Casocot
Dumaguete City

DRAMATIC life will finally return to the Luce Auditorium stage on March 12, in what someone has already and appropriately described as "a burst of theatrical electric bolt" after several arguably lean years that have seen Dumaguete theater reduced to nothing more than an exercise of thespic futility—like watching another tired rerun of a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.

Dumaguete City, courtesy of the VDay College Campaign of Silliman University, will be staging Eve Ensler's controversial play, "The Vagina Monologues," to commemorate Women's Month, with satellite activities to include a symposium on women's issues, a charity walkathon, poetry reading and art exhibit.

The play is directed by Laurie Raymundo, with female students and community leaders taking part.

It started two years ago when the response from local audiences to the New Voice Company's performance of Ensler's enormously appealing and very provocative play was ecstatic—the way one knows one has seen something phenomenal when the hair on one's skin does a standing ovation.

Much the same way Glenn Close, during a performance of "Vagina" in New York, brought down the house—and the conservative reserve of the thousand people in the audience—by making them all enunciate, with relish, the word "cunt."

"It was a kind of baptism of fire—a release," said local theater aficionado Moses Joshua Atega.

After last year's local performance of TVM for the VDay campaign, which also proved successful, local VDay coordinators, Michele Joan Valbuena and Margie Udarbe-Alvarez of Silliman's Psychology Department, decided to mount the show one more time this year. And the city, to say the least, is already abuzz with V power.

But what people would not know about is the battle the production staff had to wage to bring the play annually to Dumaguete.

That much Monique Wilson, the artistic director of New Voice Company, lamented when she wrote in her notes in the play's first run in Metro Manila: "Now this is apparently where the problem lies with some people. The word 'vagina.' Sponsor after sponsor turned us down because they didn't like the title. 'It doesn't fit with our image,' they said. 'Our clients would get turned off.'

"Of course, I had to respect these decisions (albeit with a heavy heart)—no matter that more than half our population are women, and they have vaginas; no matter that it talked about life-changing, life-affirming positive things; and no matter that it would change the way they would look at the world and at women.

"I guess these things are not as important as 'image.' The issues of women are not as important as, say, supporting a work that played up the stereotypes of Asian women as prostitutes—where women are docile, weak, and submissive. I guess I don't understand ... "

"We did not initially understand either the way some people in the community had recoiled at the initial suggestion of bringing 'Vagina' down here," Valbuena admitted.

From forceful suggestions to rename the play "The V Monologues" to outright campaigns by some people to malign the show as something close to "pornographic"—the epithets hurled and hurt, but did not break the VDay organizers' spirit.

"It was only to be expected," Alvarez said. "As what Eve Ensler wrote in the very beginning of TVM, 'A woman's private parts are like the Bermuda Triangle—no one ever reports back.'"

Brave souls

In the end, it took brave souls in Silliman, like former university pastor Dr. Proceso Udarbe, former vice president for academic affairs Dr. Betty Abregana, and president Agustin Pulido, to nip the controversy in the bud, and showed Dumaguete that unintelligent constraints, without context except blind morality, had no place in the humanism of the 21st century.

What they got, and will get come next play date—misplaced righteousness aside—is a set of imaginative monologues that range from the hilarious, to the erotic, to the uplifting, to the harrowing, and to the wonderful.

THE AUTHOR, a winner of the 2003 Don Carlos Palanca Awards for Literature, is an instructor of the Silliman University's Department of English and Literature.

Inspirations for a law

LUCID INTERVAL

Rowena V. Guanzon

CORAZON Dalumpines heads the Liya-Liya Multipurpose Cooperative in Antique. She is not a barangay official but she is one of the women who are fed up with violence against women (VAW) in her community. Women were beaten by their husbands or partners when they have not prepared a meal, or when they refused to have sexual intercourse.

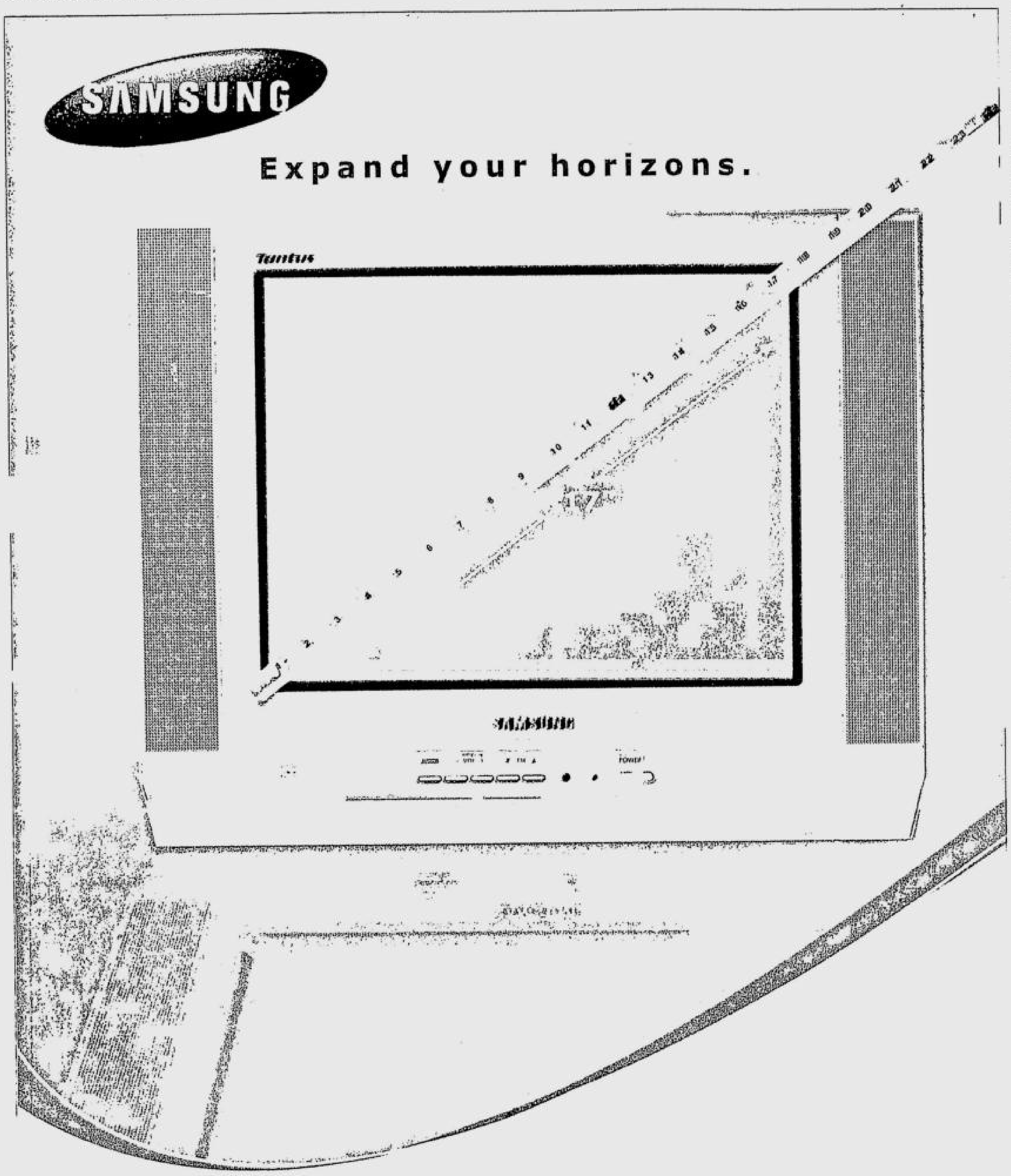
During the consultation of Sibol or the Sama Samang Inisyatiba ng Kababaihan sa Pagbabago ng Batas at Lipunan, a network of women's nongovernment organizations engaged in legislative reform for women, Corazon articulated the need for barangay officials to have the power to order abusers to stop the violence.

Sibol, which includes the Women's Legal Bureau, Women's Crisis Center, and the Democratic Socialist Women of the Philippines, drafted the Anti-Abuse of Women in Intimate Relationships (AntiAwir) Bill in 1995 that Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo filed in 1998. Lawyer Evaly Ursua and Beth Angsioco, among others, were the prime movers of the bill, which the Senate used as basis for the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004 (Anti VAWC).

At that time, barangay officials and policemen were afraid to enter the dwelling where domestic violence was taking place. This is the same concern of the Lihok Pilipina in Cebu, which has replicated its Bantay Banay or Family Watch program in more than 40 areas in Cebu.

After nearly 10 years, the Anti-VAWC Act was passed and the President will sign it on March 8. During the 10-year wait, women's rights advocates Angsioco, Ursua, Nemenzo, Ujano et al. of Sibol and Ana Sarabia of the Kalakasan were sued for libel by former Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas, husband of the late Maria Carlson who sought help from women's NGOs. This is the inspiration for the provision on immunity from civil and criminal liability for barangay officials and private individuals which Senate President Franklin Drilon also supported because it is patterned after the immunity from suit of social workers under the anti-child abuse law or Republic Act No. 7610.

This law could have been passed sooner if legislators believed the data on VAW and gave priority to women's rights. A World Bank 1993 study states that among women aged 15-44 worldwide, gender-based violence accounts for more deaths than cancer, traffic injuries and malaria put together.



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COUNTER PRODUCTIVITY
Members of a women's group urge the government during a press conference in Quezon City on Friday to provide free contraceptives that are too expensive for many of them to buy.
JOAN BONDOC

Girl, 3 others die in QC, Las Piñas accidents

FOUR people, including a 9-year-old girl, were killed and two were injured in vehicular accidents in Las Piñas and Quezon City.

Ariane Tascha Soriano, 9, was on a bicycle along Republic Avenue, Barangay Greater Fairview, Quezon City, when a Ford cargo truck hit her at about 5 p.m. on Thursday.

The truck driver, Felipe Milan Jr., 53, voluntarily surrendered to barangay security men. Milan told them that the girl suddenly swerved to the middle of the lane. The driver added he stepped on the brakes too late. He is now detained at the City Traffic Sector 5 office.

At around 1 a.m. yesterday, Rose Madel de Vera, Arnold Firme and Emmanuel Delara, were on their way to a wake of a friend and were waiting for a taxi at the corner of Manila Times Village on the Zapote-Alabang Road in Pamplona, Las Piñas, when a delivery van hit them, said SPO4 Juanito Rafael.

The policeman said the vehicle made an abrupt turn and fell on its left side injuring the two passengers, Domingo Taboso and Zaldy Decatoria.

Taboso and Decatoria were rushed to the Perpetual Hospital in Las Piñas.

The driver of the vehicle, Leo Gonzales, turned tail and ran before the police arrived at the accident.

Rafael said that the police are now looking for Gonzales, who will be charged with reckless driving resulting to multiple homicide. *Edson Tandoc Jr., Joyce Abaño*

METROBRIEFS

P1 M for Panlilio's head

THE DEPARTMENT of Interior and Local Government has increased the reward for the capture of Jose Ma. "Bong" Panlilio from P500,000 to P1 million. Panlilio is wanted for the murder of Albert Gutierrez and Ariel Real. Panlilio was said to have robbed half brothers Gutierrez and Real of P250,000 before they were murdered in July 2003. The suspect, son of prominent jeweler Fe Panlilio, is also facing charges of swindling and attempted kidnapping. *Joyce Abaño*

Traffic men shot

THREE men on Thursday shot and wounded SPO2 Antonio de la Rosa and enforcer Alfonso Cariaga while they were directing traffic on a busy Pasig City intersection. De la Rosa has been declared "out of danger" at the Mission Hospital in the city, said SPO4 Alexander Galang. Cariaga was wounded in the stomach and is recuperating at the same hospital. Investigators said De la Rosa had stopped a passenger jeepney for a traffic violation on Amang Rodriguez Avenue and was talking over the radio when the suspects approached him from behind and shot him. Cariaga was shot when he tried to help De la Rosa. *Luige del Puerto*

Woman found in trash pile

TWO YOUNG scavengers yesterday found an unconscious woman under a pile of trash in Better Living, Parañaque City. PO3 Carlito Nobleza, said the woman was still alive when the two kids found her, but she died on the way to the Cumcare Clinic. Nobleza said that the victim had three wounds in the head and was only clad in a red shirt.
Joyce Abaño

No fare hike, no strike ... for now

By Clarissa Batino and Edson Tandoc Jr.

COMMUTERS have been spared the inconvenience of paying higher fares, as well as a transport strike on Monday, after the government yesterday convinced leaders of transport groups to call off their protest action at least until March 16.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board would decide on March 16 whether or not to grant jeepney groups their petition for a P1 provisional increase in public fares.

Transport holiday

Department of Transportation and Communication officials also told the public transport leaders that the government would convince the oil companies to give a P1 discount on diesel prices for jeepney drivers in selected areas nationwide.

Yesterday's dialogue began at about 3 p.m. and ended at 7 p.m.

After the talks, major jeepney groups, including the Federation of Drivers and Jeepney Operators of the Philippines (Fejodap) and the Pinag-isang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) decided to call off the scheduled transport holiday on March 8.

Mar Garvida, Piston president, told the INQUIRER yesterday that they decided to give the government time to study their petition for a fare hike by not pushing through with the strike.

But jeepney groups warned that without a favorable action on their fare hike petition, they would stage a massive transport holiday.

Discount on oil prices

On March 1, jeepney drivers held a strike which, according to Piston, paralyzed 80 percent of public transportation nationwide.

Mendoza said that the energy department was able to convince Petron, Shell and Caltex to reduce the price of diesel in the provincial stations by P1 per liter.

But the three major oil players, in return, reduced the discount on diesel in Metro Manila to P1 per liter, from the previous P2.10 per liter.

Currently, diesel costs between P17 and P18 per liter. The price of diesel has risen by about 43 percent in the last two years.

LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista said that the transportation department would have to work with labor and trade groups to determine how a P1 increase in fares would affect wages and prices of basic commodities.

Wage hike

"The labor department is worried that a fare hike would prompt labor groups to ask for a wage hike," said Mendoza. "The trade department said a wage hike could lead to layoffs because businesses could not absorb the higher cost. These situations could drive foreign investors away."

Bautista said on March 16, the LTFRB would hold a public hearing on the regular petition of jeepney groups for a P1.50 fare hike in the first 5 kilometers plus a 37-centavo increase per succeeding km.

Cops nab suspected brains of Betti Sy slay

By Alcuin Papa

GOVERNMENT agents scored anew with the arrest of two top kidnapping suspects and the surrender of a third over the weekend.

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) identified the three as Romeo Puria, Sergio Macanip Jr. and Gerardo Anover.

Puria, 32, of Hammer Street, Barangay Sauyo, Novaliches, and a native of Longos, Leyte, is ranked as the 10th most wanted kidnapper in the latest list of the Naktf. He carries a P500,000 reward for his arrest.

Members of the Naktf and the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response collared Puria in the morning of March 4 in Barangay Bucabud, Rodriguez, Rizal.

Authorities were tipped off of his whereabout by a concerned citizen who called the Naktf hotline.

Naktf records tagged Puria as responsible for the abduction of Mariane dela Rosa on March 27, 2003, in Biñan, Laguna. He was also linked to a payroll robbery in Marulas, Valenzuela, in 2002 and a robbery incident in Antipolo, Rizal, in March 2003.

He has a standing arrest warrant for kidnapping issued by Pasay City judge Pedro Gutierrez and is the 10th kidnapper in the Naktf's most wanted list to be arrested.

Macanip was arrested in the mountains of rebel-infested Barangay Cabingtan, Tongonan, Kananga, Leyte, over the weekend.

He is said to be the head of a faction of the Waray-Waray Kidnap-for-Ransom Group that kidnapped Betti Chua-Sy in November 2003.

Meanwhile, Anover, 43, alias Laydo, surrendered to the National Bureau of Investigation over the weekend in Northern Leyte.

He admitted that he was part of the group that abducted and later killed Sy, an executive of the Coca Cola Bottlers Company.

Hyla Nur; 8

HYLA Nur would no longer have to bear the pain of pricking needles.

The 8-year-old girl, whose family appealed for donations on her behalf, succumbed to her illness, Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML), last Wednesday.

Her mother, Hadidja, would like to thank all the kindhearted readers who responded to their appeal which appeared in the INQUIRER (January 27 issue).

"I want to reach all the people who had helped (my daughter) ... they are a lot of them, but no names," Hadidja said.

Let's make our highways safe

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE DEPARTMENT of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) says terrorism or sabotage was not the cause of the fire that gutted the Super Ferry 14.

The notorious Moro terrorist group Abu Sayyaf has claimed responsibility for the tragedy, saying one of its members planted a bomb on the ship.

Coast Guard divers could not find any traces of bomb explosion aboard the sunken ship.

* * *

If it's true the Abu Sayyaf owned the responsibility for the ship's tragedy, then it's courting disaster.

Relatives of passengers still missing, and the survivors of the tragedy, will not take it sitting down. Somehow, the urge for revenge will run high among them.

When the urge to take revenge materializes, the vicious circle will be complete. The vendetta killings between Christians and Muslims will never end.

And, God forbid, the situation will be like that of Israel.

* * *

Islam is a very noble religion. It's no different from other religions like Christianity and Jewish. Love of God is paramount in these religions.

But what makes Islam different is that some of its members, particularly the fundamentalists, teach violence as a means to attain heaven.

For example, there is a belief among Muslim fundamentalists that if they killed Christian infidels in defense of their faith they would ride a white horse to heaven. At heaven's gate, they would be met by virgins who would sing praises.

* * *

The imams or Muslim high priests, who don't subscribe to jihad or holy war between Islam and Christianity, should disabuse the minds of their ignorant faithful.

But the imams are not doing this because Muslims in the country live in a feudal society. Poor Muslims are made ignorant so they can be held in perpetual bondage. These ignorant Muslims can easily be manipulated by their social superiors.

If imams will preach to their faithful to love not only fellow Muslims but also members of other religions, the hostilities in Mindanao will immediately cease.

* * *

One year after the bombings of the Sasa Wharf and the Davao International Airport, the police have yet to solve the two cases.

The five-member commission formed to investigate the bombings says it was not convinced Muntazar Sundang was the Davao airport bomber. It deplores the haste with which Muntazar was charged as prime suspect.

So, if Sundang was not responsible, who was? Why can't the police catch the real culprits?

* * *

The commission also cleared former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and former military intelligence chief Victor Corpus of complicity in the two bombings.

Just as well. For how could these two gentlemen even think of killing innocent people when they are now in the thick of saving the citizenry? Reyes, from kidnappers, as chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force; and Corpus, from abusive military, as chief of the Civil Relations Service (CRS).

I personally know Corpus because I'm his adopted classmate in Class '67 of the Philippine Military Academy. In my talks with Vic, I find his concern for the poor very admirable. If he could have his way he would uplift the masses from poverty. In fact, he has some projects lined up to help the poor.

* * *

If there's a lesson to be learned from the death of starlet Halina Perez, it's that we should make our highways safe.

Perez died when the car she was riding in collided with a trailer on a highway in Del Gallego, Camarines Sur, early Thursday morning.

The car was speeding on the highway because Perez was hurrying back to Manila immediately after an engagement in Camarines Norte.

A survivor of the car crash, actress Danna Garcel, said they were traveling at top speed.

Where were the cops assigned to make our highways safe?

* * *

When I'm not in Manila, I go on out-of-town trips most of which entail my traveling on the highways.

In those countless trips, there was only one time that I saw a car of the police Traffic Management Group (TMG) parked on the shoulder of the highway. This was in Palawan.

I noticed that the cops were apprehending cargo trucks and not speeding vehicles. The reason is, of course, obvious unless you were born yesterday.

I honked my car's horn when I passed by, startling one of the cops who were in the middle of the highway while flagging down cargo trucks.

* * *

If the government wants fewer accidents on our highways, it should overhaul the Traffic Management Group and place more competent people in the traffic safety agency.

TMG places more emphasis in going after car thieves than in arresting reckless and drunken drivers.

True, catching car thieves is also one of the jobs of the TMG. But its primary job is making our highways safe from speed maniacs.

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Hog dealers butcher Metro meat deliveries

By Christine Gaylican, Luige del Puerto and Edson Tandoc Jr.

HOG DEALERS yesterday slashed by 74 percent the supply of pork in Metro Manila as they kicked off a three-day protest action to denounce high farmgate prices.

The pig holiday, however, had little impact on consumers, many of whom have been shying away from buying pork due to high prices.

'Successful' protest action

Hit hard by the cut in deliveries were the markets of Nepa-Q-Mart and Fairview in Quezon City, Quinta and Blumentritt in Manila, Guadalupe in Makati City, Alabang in Muntinlupa, and New Antipolo in Rizal.

"Our protest is successful and the full impact would be felt this weekend," said Darah Pineda, spokesperson of the Meat and Hog Dealers Association of the Philippines (MHDAP).

The dealers group, which buys livestock, butchers it then distributes in Metro Manila, has 140 members that supplies 80 percent of pork in the metropolis and in some parts of Bulacan, Tagaytay and Batangas.

Price rollback

MHDAP members are objecting to high farmgate prices of hogs that currently stand from P90 to P93 per kilo.

The group wants the Department of Agriculture to intervene and ask the hog raisers to rollback farmgate prices to P82 per kilo.

Prices of livestock shot up after commercial and backyard hog raisers cutback on production.

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr. downplayed the impact of the pig holiday but said his agency was exploring the possible importation of pork in the coming weeks to augment the local supply.

This developed as National Federation of Hog Raisers president Albert Lim disclosed that it might take six months before the supply of livestock would increase.

Local producers

Pork deliveries at the Nepa-Q-Mart did not arrive but some stall owners managed to buy meat from some local producers.

A few others sold pork from hogs they themselves raised and slaughtered.

Rose, 34, a vendor, bought her supply from one of her fellow vendors at P135 a kilo, which she sold at P140.

In the eastern part of Metro Manila, there were deliveries of pork but in less than the regular quantities.

"We used to get three hogs a day," explained meat vendor Teresita Galapati of the Marikina Public Market. "Now only two arrived."

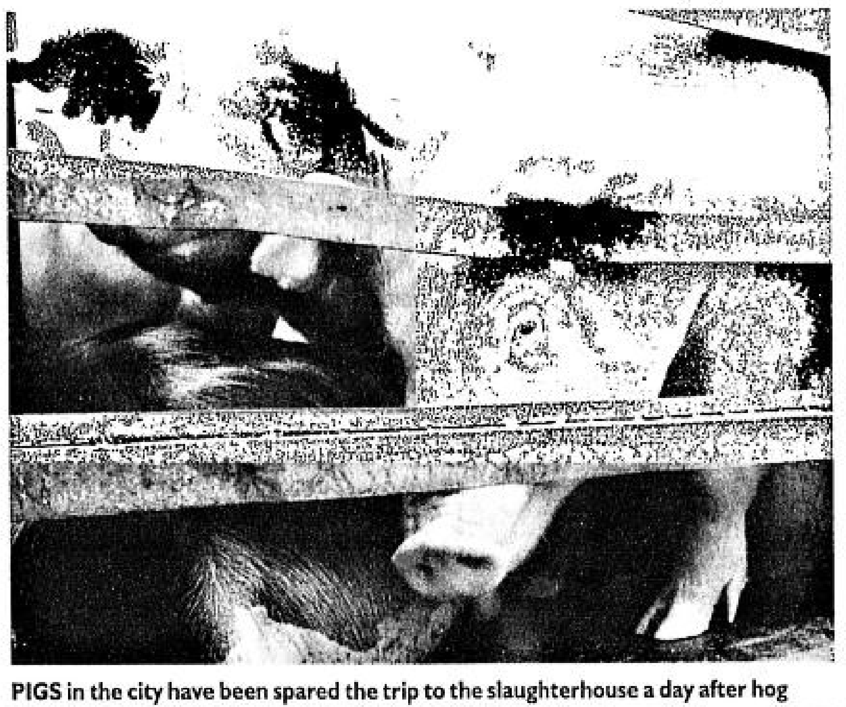
Supply stable

Pork supply in the Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela area was stable.

However, there were few takers since meat prices ranged from P140 to P150 per kilo. Up from P110 to P130 per kilo in December.

Gina Sablan said customers had been staying away from meat stalls over the past few weeks, adding she would be lucky if she could sell half a hog in a day.

A consumer, Judith Tilos of the Industrial Valley, Marikina City said her family has shifted to eating fish and vegetables following the price increases.



PIGS in the city have been spared the trip to the slaughterhouse a day after hog dealers decided to cut the supply of meat to Metro Manila wet markets. ERIK ARAZAS

Death cons want new judge

THE PUBLIC Attorney's Office yesterday asked the Marikina judge who presided over the trial of Roberto Lara and Roderick Licayan to inhibit himself from the reopened case of the two death convicts.

PAO chief Persida Rueda-Acosta said Judge Reuben dela Cruz of Regional Trial Court Branch 272 should inhibit himself from hearing the case since he was the one who sentenced Lara and Licayan to death.

She said Lara and Licayan also wrote her about their misgivings concerning Dela Cruz.

She noted that when the convicts' lawyers tried to introduce more evidence before the two were sentenced to death, Dela Cruz denied their motion, saying that they were just delaying the trial.

Dela Cruz is again trying Lara and Licayan's case after the Supreme Court last month ordered the suspension of the convicts' execution and the reopening of their case. *Philip Tubeza*

2 children die of diphtheria in Makati City

TWO CHILDREN have reportedly died of diphtheria in a slum community in Makati, prompting city officials to conduct mass vaccinations and distribute antibiotics in affected areas.

The Makati Health Department and Department of Health officials identified the fatalities as John Michael Geno, 4, and his brother, Justin, 9 months, of Sitio 8, West Rembo.

Justin died at the Ospital ng Makati on March 1 while John Michael died at the San Lazaro Hospital two days later. Both were immediately buried to avoid an epidemic.

Local health workers are now administering treatment and antibiotics to the victims' older brother, Jejomar, 9, who was also afflicted with the disease.

According to city epidemiologist Ofelia Tolentino, diphtheria is a very contagious and potentially life-threatening infection.

Tolentino said that they are placing neighboring barangays under surveillance to trace the source of the disease.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay said in a press conference yesterday that he will immediately recommend that a resolution be passed declaring West Rembo and nearby East Rembo and South Cembo as "calamity" areas. *Margaux Ortiz*

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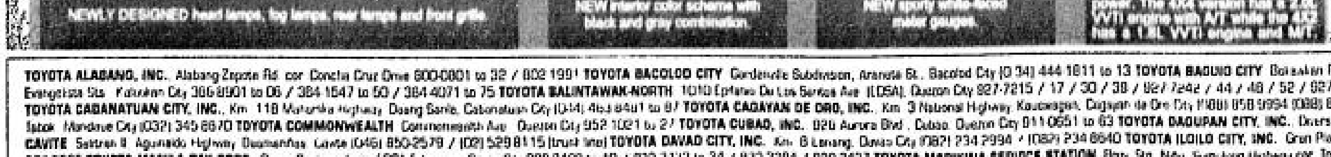
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Compiled by L. Manguiat

MOTOR SPORTS: F1 Foster's Australian Grand Prix Qualifying; 10:55 a.m. (r-7:30 p.m.); Star Sports—Vroom, vroom! The racing season officially begins down under.

BASKETBALL: NBA-Mavs vs Spurs; 9 a.m. (r-9.30 p.m.); ESPN; Cavs vs Hornets; 9 a.m. (r- 8 p.m.); Solar Sports —Dallas and San Antonio engage in a Texas shootout while Cleveland's LeBron James faces New Orleans' Baron Davis.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS

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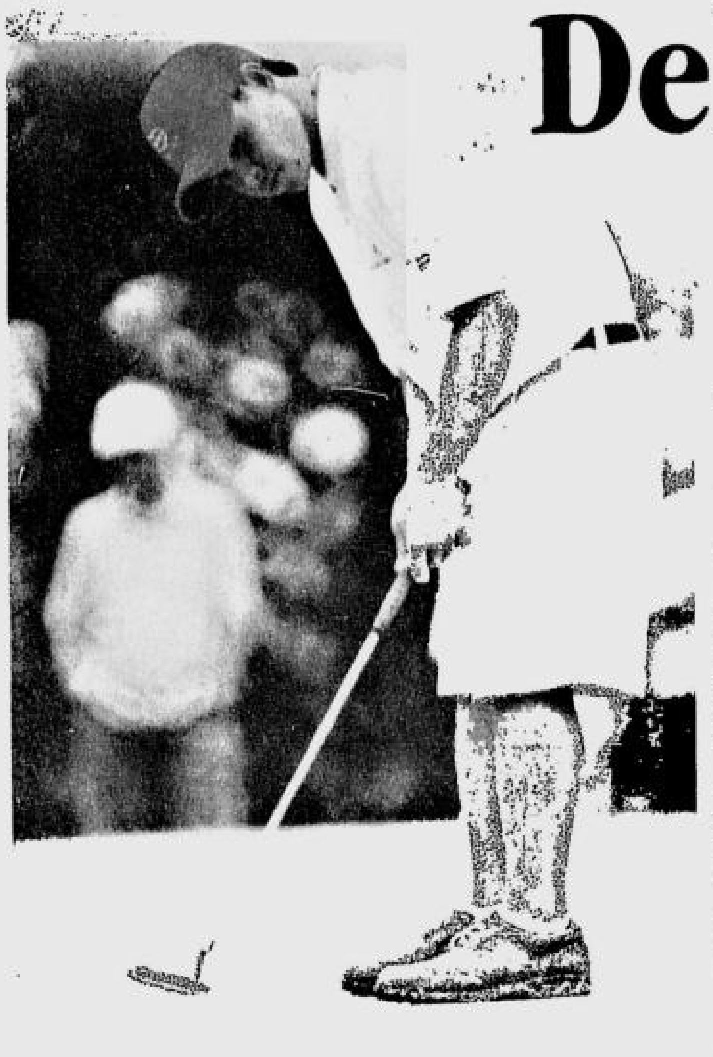
Del Monte on threshold of Interclub history



DEL MONTE'S Jaraula makes his par on No.3. ROGER CARPIO

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—It's not a done deal for Del Monte, but it's done and over with for Canlubang.

The Del Monte parbusters, seeking a breakthrough win for a Mindanao squad in the Philippine Airlines Interclub championships, held their ground in difficult conditions on their home turf against the brave youngsters from Southwoods yesterday and kept their seven-point lead going into the final round at the Pueblo de Oro course.

But the mighty Sweeties of the Canlubang team that has been conceded a record fifth straight title and 13th overall crown will complete today's championship pairings as virtual galleries for the first time in a long, long while.

Hoping to shave Del Monte's huge lead to get within striking distance, Canlubang unceremoniously bowed out of contention instead with one round left after getting outclassed again by the two front-runners, which checked in with matching 141 output playing under a steady drizzle at the tough Del Monte course in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Canlubang managed only 136 for the day and found itself 22 points behind Del Monte and 15 off Southwoods.

"We were hoping to get more points from Southwoods, but we're happy with our result," said playing team captain Ramon "Yoyong" Velez, who will be spearheading the final-day drive of the Del Monte squad.

Proving his tournament-high 43 points from a medal score of seven-under-par 65 in the first round was no rare stroke of brilliance, Romeo Jaraula scored 37 this time to pace Del Monte despite the soggy playing conditions.

Roger Retuerto's son Lino matched par 72 for 36 points and Arsenio Mondilla and Ben Miñoza, one of two brothers of the famous Frankie Miñoza in the squad, both carded 34s to boost Del Monte's total for three rounds to 431.

Getting raves for the undaunted play of its young talents, Southwoods actually moved within four points of Del Monte after the front nine before Jaraulla and Retuerte restored the seven-point margin with strong play coming home.

"Win or lose, it's a victory for us," said Southwoods skipper Jeric Hechanova, who calls himself the "baby sitter" of the team that is playing beyond expectations after getting whipped by Canlubang by 20 points last year.

Toru Nakajima again starred for Southwoods with 37 points, Hanson So Jr. added 36, 19-year-old Michael Bibat, who is built like a basketball player, contributed 35 and TonTon Asistio, the "baby" of the tournament at 14 years old, again counted with a 33.

"We will try our best, but we are not going to put pressure on us by going for the title at all cost. The boys are here only for the experience in the first place," said Hechanova, who will be the "sweeper" for Southwoods today.

Rather than rue the unexpected Canlubang debacle, Tommy Manotoc said the resurgence of Del Monte and Southwoods was a positive development for golf while helping revive interest in what is regarded as the national golf team championships.

Manotoc, the seniors individual champion last Sunday, was held in reserve for today, but the move backfired as Juvic Pagunsan and Co. failed to deliver in the third round.

Pagunsan and Dave Hernandez combined for only 66 points after joining hands for a 77 the other day while Jay Bayron and Ronnie Torrecampo led Canlubang's 136 for the day with 35s.

DEL MONTE/ A20

2005 Games preparations a mess; POC's Dayrit hit

ON THE SPOT: Dayrit

By Marc Anthony Reyes

MANILA, main hub of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, yesterday pushed the panic button and announced it is "already too late" for the city to carry out preparations for the biennial meet.

Ali Atienza, son of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and chair of the Manila Sports Council, said the city has been "left in the dark" as to the extent of Manila's participation.

He blamed the Philippine Olympic Committee, headed by Celso Dayrit, which has yet to announce the hosts of the event.

Atienza added that the POC has asked Metro Manila cities to make a commitment by passing a resolution backing up the hosting of the Games.

"But what is there to commit? We don't even know the events assigned to us," said Atienza, a former Asian taekwondo gold medalist.

Atienza did admit Dayrit had told him of plans to stage the opening ceremony at the Luneta.

But, aside from that, no other proposals came from the POC whose officials comprise the Philippine SEAG organizing committee.

However, the POC has explained that venues and sites will be discussed in the coming months, as they have to tackle the composition of events first.

The Philsoc used to include government people among its officials, including Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain, but the POC reconstituted the body late last year.

The move, explained Dayrit, was in accordance with the Olympic charter which frowns on government intervention. Philsoc is now composed of POC officials.

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THEY STRUCK GOLD: Clockwise from right, De Vega, Nepomuceno, Buhain, Velasco, Muros.

Fiesta of '91 heroes drums up Manila SEAG campaign

EACH and every one of them labored and fought, each and every one had flag and country in their hearts and minds.

With the battlecry: "We missed it by one [in 1991], now it's your turn!", Eric Buhain, who now chairs the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) a decade after claiming six swimming gold medals in the 1991 Manila Southeast Asian Games, yesterday announced the holding of a grand reunion of the heroes of 1991, when the country finished an unprecedented second (by a mere one gold medal) behind Indonesia.

The grand reunion-cum-morale-boosting kick off event has July as its target date, 15 months before the SEAG returns to the country after 14 years. The 23rd edition of the SEAG is set from November 20 to 30 next year.

Lydia de Vega, Mercado now annexed to her name, has a lovely family to tend to.

Paeng Nepomuceno still rolls those balls the way a four-time World Cup champion should, while Bong Coo, now into politics, is still revered as the queen of Philippine bowling.

Buhain, more than 20 lbs beyond his championship weight, splashes not in the pool but as top honcho of local sports.

There are many more on the list, like Elma Muros of athletics, swimming's Akiko Thomson, boxing's Mansueto Velasco Jr., John Baylon of judo, bowling's Paulo Valdez, shooting's Nathaniel "Tac' Padilla, Felix Barrientos of tennis, and taekwondo's Bea Lucero.

"All my fellow athletes who fought in 1991, each and everyone of us who held fort, winners or non-winners, find in our hearts a big responsibility and obligation in 2005," said Buhain. "We may no longer be the athletes of before, although we would love to do it one more time. But we feel strongly and passionately about kicking off a campaign in 2005 like it was in 1991."

The PSC is looking at a week-long fiesta of sorts, drumming up support and awareness for the 2005 SEAG. There will be concerts and entertainment, fun competitions, exhibits, parties, cheering and pep rallies not only for the athletes, but also for all Filipinos who will showcase in the region their capability not only to host the games, but to dominate it.

Aside from the '91 heroes, also expected to grace the event are officials of the 1991 Manila Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Mansoc) led by former Trade Secretary Peter Garrucho Jr., former PSC chair Cecilio Hechanova and former heads of involved government agencies, together with the leaders of various national sports associations.

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Mariners enter inter-collegiate final; UM game forfeited

LUCENA CITY—Philippine Maritime Institute banked on a big fourth-quarter explosion to repulse Southern City Colleges, 68-60, yesterday and advance to the finals of the 58th National Students Basketball Championship at the Quezon Convention Center here.

Locked in a tight, see-saw battle with the Zamboanga-based cagers, the Mariners finally broke away for good on Cris Sta. Maria's two triples that gave them a 58-51 breather with six minutes and 11 seconds remaining.

PMI thus arranged a winner-take-all for the national title against the winner of the University of Perpetual Help-Rizal and Angeles University Foundation tussle still being played at presstime.

The AUF Great Danes earned a semifinals berth after University of Manila's 97-79 win over the Pampanga-based cagers was forfeited due to a violation of tournament rules.

A BAP committee composed of Romeo Cardenas, tournament commissioner; Ferdinand Pascual, tournament director; and members of the technical committee Gil Reglo, Arnulfo Bermeo and Michael Tolentino decided to forfeit the game after determining that UM indeed sent in 13 players in violation of a tournament rule that specifies that only 12 players are allowed to play out of the 15-man roster. UM also committed another violation, sending a player, Ace Margallo, who was not listed in the official lineup.

San Beda College walloped Philippine Christian University, 96-69, to arrange a titular showdown for the juniors crown opposite La Salle Greenhills.

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Viva 'steals' Cebuano star in PBL rookie draft

By Trina Ibarle

VIVA Mineral Water grabbed Neil Rañeses of the University of Visayas, considered a "steal," as the first overall draft pick in the brisk 63-man PBL Rookie Draft yesterday.

The 6-foot-4 Rañeses, known for his gutsy plays and perfect touch from the perimeter, is looked upon to power the Water Force to a possible first championship and redeem Viva's so-so showing in the last conference.

"I've heard of so many good things about him, so I decided to pick him. He's really a big catch," said Viva coach Koy Banal.

Meanwhile, Platinum Cup champion Fash Liquid Power picked a handful of rookies from the draft to fill up its depleted lineup for the Unity Cup set to start March 27.

The Liquid Power enlisted direct hire Reed Juntilla and University of Manila's Ronnie Matias to join Fash after the core of last conference's champion squad was acquired by Lee Pipes-Ateneo, the league's newest team

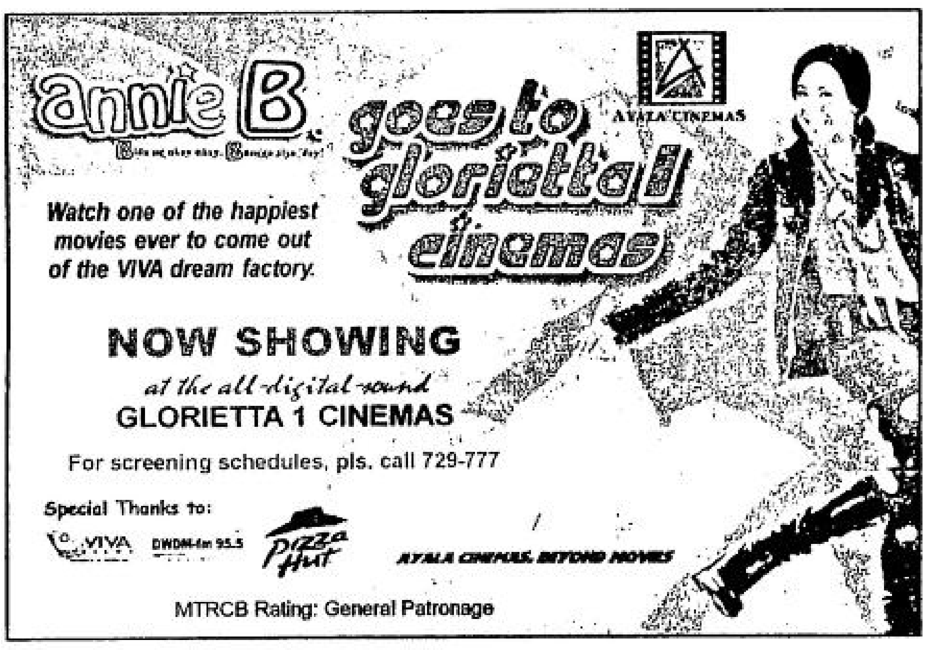
Spitfire guard LA Tenorio, Larry Fonacier, Paolo Bugia, JC Intal and Doug Kramer will be joining their fellow Blue Eagles at Lee Pipes to be coached by Sandy Arespacochaga.

"We lost most of our players . . . so we are still in the process of completing our lineup," said Fash team manager Bernard Yang, referring to PBA roookies Rich Alvarez, Wesley Gonzales and Peter June Simon.

Meanwhile, Welcoat Paints acquired the services of ICTSI-La Salle veterans Dominic Uy and Dino Aldeguer from the dispersal draft, after the Archers took a leave of absence to improve their showing in the upcoming UAAP cage wars.

Montaña Pawnshop plucked Cebuano draftees, including second overall pick Gerry Cavan, Raoul Latonio, Ronald Bucao, Ronjay Buenafe and Gester Ebuen, along with PBA free agent Theodore Hawkins and St. Benilde's Angelus Raymundo to complete the Jewels' selection.

Adamson's Mark Kong, Fil-Am Serafin Aquino and Eric Tingzon were picked by BluStar Detergent.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MISSING
MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

D. Monte on the. . .

From page A19

Meanwhile, Pueblo de Oro opened up a 12-point lead over Wack Wack and Forest Hills in the Founders division with 378. Negros led John Hay by two points with 337 in the Sportswriters class while Navy moved into a tie at 282 with Alta Vista for top spot in the Friendship section.

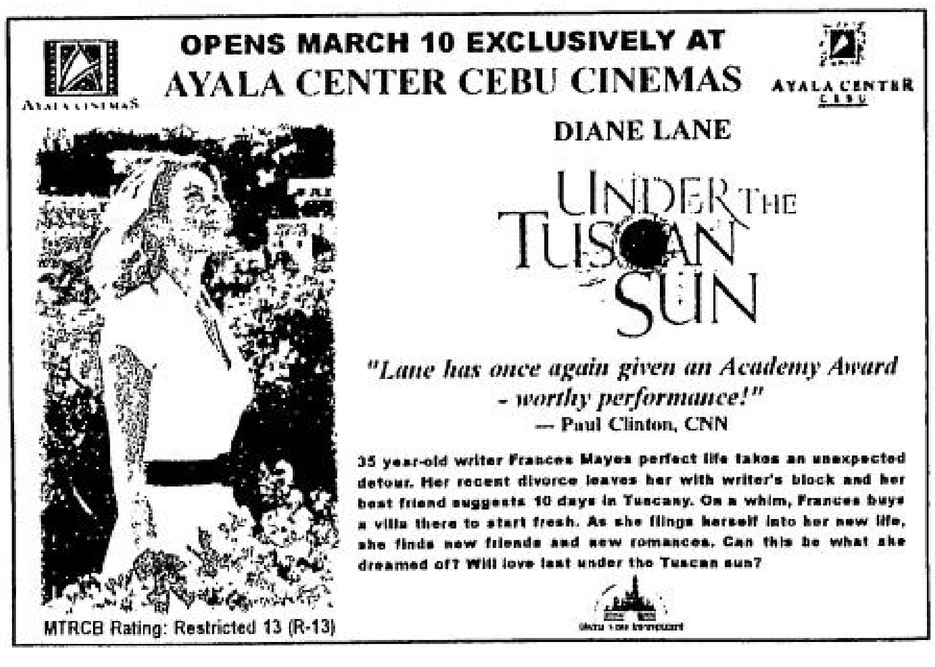
The third round scores:

CHAMPIONSHIP—Del Monte 438 (156-141-141), Southwoods 431 (150-140-141), Canlubang 416 (140-140-136), SFO Crystal Springs 290 (106-97-87), Davao 279 (84-100-95), Lanang 251 (71-80-100), San Jose 247 (78-98-71), Fil-Oz Melbourne 179 (64-59-56), Pinoy Golfers 168 (39-38-91), Alliance 164 (65-49-50)

FOUNDERS—Pueblo de Oro 378 (126-128-124), Wack Wack 366 (122-130-114), Forest Hills 366 (122-124-120), Riviera 360 (116-122-122), Cebu 355 (128-118-109), Manila Golf 335 (113-114-108), Sherwood Hills 333 (108-121-101), Alabang 330 (108-121-101), Palos Verdes 300 (102-115-83)

SPORTSWRITERS—Negros 337 (109-120-108), John Hay 335 (111-102-122), Team LA 325 (101-117-107), Valley 314 (103-100-111), Sta. Elena 311 (104-96-111), Orchard 308 (107-97-104), Iloilo 306 (100-94-112), Pinoy 298 (99-100-99), Villamor 293 (89-98-106), Leyte 292 (100-94-98), Camp Evangelista 284 (97-89-98)

FRIENDSHIP—Alta Vista 283 (92-92-99), Phil Navy 283 (86-88-109) Pittsburg 276 (83-80-113), Mactan Coral 276 (106-81-89), Zamboanga 271 (96-91-84), Baguio 268 (83-95-90), Lumbia 267 (85-95-87), San Juanico 261 (81-84-96), Capitol Hills 260 (88-89-83), Marikina 254 (94-76-84), Victorias 248 (86-98-64), South Cotabato 243 (85-68-89), UP Tee Jots 227 (76-80-71), Fil-Oz Sydney 218 (61-63-75), Club Filipino 213 (59-80-74), Pagsanjan San Jose 204, Gofinos 189, Skywest 180, Seattle 178, Riyadh Darab HGA 169, Cotabato 169, Saudi Aramco Dhahran 165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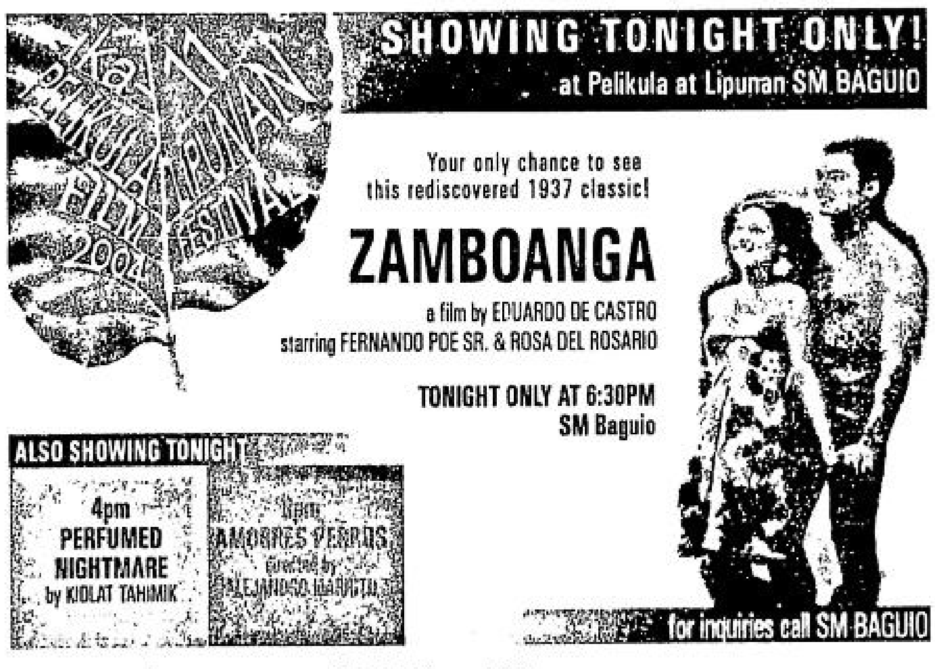
MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)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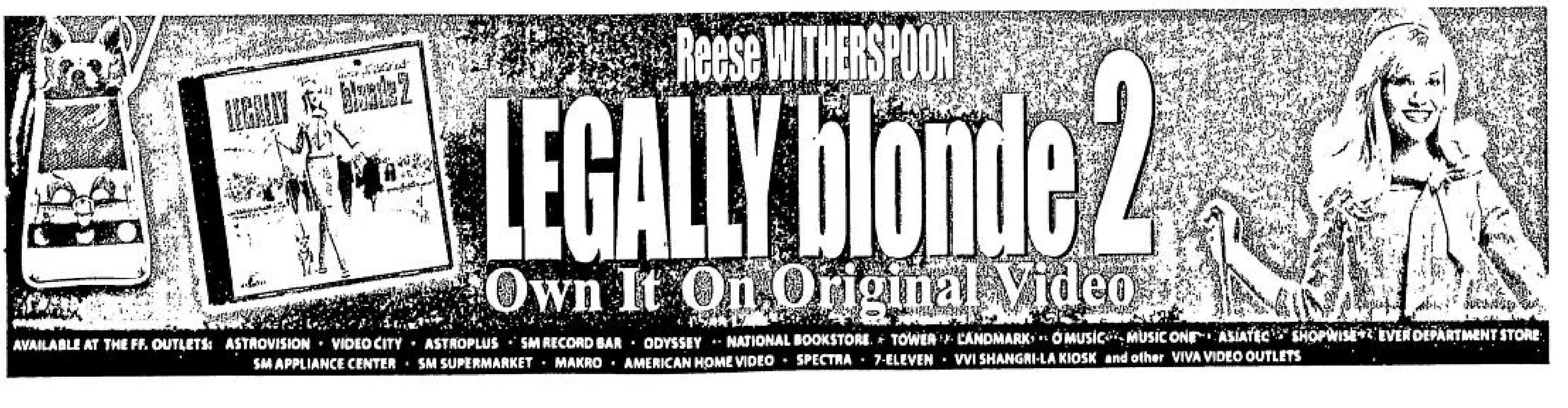
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SMB import a big worry for Ginebra

BETWEEN Talk 'N Text and Barangay Ginebra, which stake unblemished records against separate opponents today, the Gin Kings carry the heavier burden in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Philsports Arena.

Sporting identical 2-0 cards, the Phone Pals and the Gin Kings bid to hold fast onto the leadership against the FedEx Express and the San Miguel Beermen, respectively.

Coach Allan Caidic and his wards will face a San Miguel Beer quintet beefed up by one of the most dominant imports of the conference.

Art Long, a 6-foot-7 pivotman who played for the Seattle Supersonics in the NBA, was virtually unstoppable in the paint during the Beermen's 105-76 conquest of the Express last week.

The Gin Kings are in a frantic race to bring in George Reese Jr., a 6-foot-7 inside operator who could put an even body on Long.

Unfortunately, the Gin Kings wouldn't have enough time to acquire Reese, a former Ohio State University mainstay in the US NCAA, for today's curtain-raiser.

Caidic still have to rely on the 6-foot-2 Rossel Ellis to keep the Gin Kings on a roll.

"We have to find a way to stop Art Long inside. We can't allow him to frolic in the shaded area," said Caidic.

Eric Menk, Romel Adducul, Andy Seigle and Banjo Calpito should strengthen the Kings' interior defense while getting ample support from the backcourt.

The Beermen also have plenty of frontliners to spare, who, when left open, could produce wonders for coach Jong Uichico.

Danny Ildefonso, Nick Belasco, Dorian Peña, Arnold Gamboa and Bryan Gahol could always force the issue in the shaded lane and make the Beermen almost invincible underneath.

The Phone Pals possess the same luxury at the frontline when the Manny Pangilinan-owned ballclub clashes with the Express in the other game.

Asi Taulava and Randy Holcomb have been combining for at least 55 points and 30 rebounds a night for the Phone Pals, figures which the Express must seriously consider to arrest a two-game skid.

FedEx import Alvin Jefferson, despite having wrecked the glass board at Araneta Coliseum during a workout, has soured up like a lemon the Express bid, despite the wide 6-foot-7 frame of the former Harlem Globetrotter. *June Navarro*

GAMES TODAY *(Philsports Arena)*
4 p.m.—Talk N Text vs FedEx
6:15 p.m.—Ginebra vs San Miguel

SHELL'S Anthony dela Cruz beats Purefoods' Reginald Botler to the rebound during their PBA match Thursday. Shell won, 94-91. ERNIE U SARMIENTO

Aguilar 2nd to Japanese in Bali moto

DEFENDING Asian motocross champion Glen Aguilar of the Namssa-Revtex Racing Team kicked of his title-retention bid on a strong note when he bagged second place overall in the opening round of the 2004 UAM Asian Motocross Championship series held last Sunday at the Sirkuit Serangan in Bali, Indonesia.

The seven-time Philippine motocross champion plucked 42 points by finishing third and second among 24 riders from 12 countries in the two races of the 125cc division.

He wound up a tad behind leg winner Tadakazu Otsuka of Japan, who garnered 47 points. Indonesian Aep Dadang was third with 38 points.

The two 125cc motos were disputed in muddy conditions and provided a preview of the fireworks expected in the series' second round slated in Puerto Princesa City on March 29.

The race jury called off the remaining four laps of the 18-lap final moto after the track became too soggy and unmanageable for the riders. The development was a welcome break for Aguilar whose brand-new four-stroke 250cc began acting up halfway through the final moto.

"*Grabe ang hirap*. The design of the track is very technical—*ang daming* steps up, triple, long jumps. *Mabato pa, kasing laki ng* coconut *yung mga bato*," said Aguilar.

Aguilar's performance in Bali, which delighted FIM UAM president Macky Carapiet, was an improvement on his fifth place feat in the series' Indonesia stop last year.

Beerman Danny Seigle reactivated

DOCTORS yesterday gave Danny Seigle the go-signal to rejoin the Beermen starting with their game against Barangay Ginebra today.

But the 6-foot-6 swingman, who underwent an operation of his left achilles tendon in September 2002, will have to get into the groove gradually.

"He's been a part of the rotation the past few practice sessions. He would probably come off the bench and play a few minutes until he recovers his timing," said San Miguel Beer ace playmaker Olsen Racela.

Without Seigle, the Beermen failed to reach the Finals of the All-Filipino twice after capturing the crown in 2001.

Seigle, who helped the Beermen win five championships along with two-time MVP Danny Ildefonso from 1999 to 2001, was supposed to rejoin his team in April 2003 but medical problems got in the way.

While he was undergoing the final stages of therapy, Seigle's left ankle swelled, forcing the team management to prolong his stay in the injury list. *June Navarro*

HK yacht takes line honors in Boracay

FRANK Pong's *Jelik* towed some of the Asia-Pacific's finest yachts to the finish in the recent 2nd Standard Insurance Manila-to-Boracay Race, a 203-nautical mile race that started off the Manila Yacht Club.

Pong's streamlined craft, a Reichel Pugh 77 from the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (RHKYC), took line honors in 19 hours, 41 minutes and 53 seconds to bag the Standard Insurance Trophy and the perpetual Kellet Island Trophy as overall IRC Racing Class winner.

Standard Insurance Centennial II, skippered by Ernesto "Judes" Echauz, and *Karakoa*, of Ray Ordoveza, finished second and third, respectively, in the field of 13 yachts.

Echauz's Sydney 46 yacht, representing the MYC and Subic Bay Yacht Club, clocked 30:50:36, beating Ordoveza's Andrews 53 craft by 15 minutes, 59 seconds.

Andy Soriano's Swan-80 *Maligaya* won the race in 25:33 last year.

Martin Tanco's *Challenge*, Doni Altura's *Vivaldi* and Bobby Benares' *Lethal Weapon* from the Puerto Galera Yacht Club finished in that order in IRC's Division B. *China Rose* of Rainer Blum won the PY Cruising Class.

ARNIS AT OLYMPEX—Various sports demonstrations like the attack-and-defense sparring between Muntinlupa's Renante D'Ibanez (left) and Army sergeant Regie B. Sanchez highlight the ongoing international trade exposition on sports, fitness and leisure, also known as Olympex 2004, at the new PICC exhibition hall. Presented by the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Department of Tourism, Olympex 2004 is open free to the public from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. until tomorrow. The event features the biggest names in sports apparels, shoes and equipment.

Hoops school all set for new training tour

THE BASKETBALL school founded by the PBA's only seven-time Best Import Bobby Parks and former PBL commissioner Charlie Favis kicks off its countrywide summer camps on March 29 at the Meralco Gym on Ortigas Avenue in Pasig City.

Youngsters 6 to 11 and 12 to 17 years old can join the school's Basic, Intermediate and Advance programs and gain the chance to train under some of the best basketball trainers in the PBA and the PBL as well as the 5-Star Camps in the US.

Hoops will again unveil some of the latest in basketball technology, among them the McCall's Rebounder, (to improve rebounding and pivoting skills) and Rite-Flight balls (to improve shooting arch).

All participants will receive, free of charge, an imported basketball, Mossimo playing shirt, sports socks, knapsack, squirt bottle, a workbook and VCD (Basketball with Bibby), Growee vitamins, calendar, certificate of completion, and an ID card which the kids can use to attend future sessions at Hoops venues.

For inquiries, call 687-4364, 687-2025 and 688-0167 or email groweehoops@hotmail.com.

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Warne of Del Monte

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—OK, quickly now to Robert Warne.

Robert Warne was the guy who dumped 36 balls into the lake guarding the par-3, 165-yard 16th of Del Monte Golf Club in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. That was in April 1938. The feat (not embarrassment, mind you) is immortalized by a slab of stone planted beside the tee box of No. 16. Inscribed are the words, "Warne's Hole. In April 1938, Mr. Warne hit 36 balls into the lake."

A non-golfer would maybe call Robert Warne crazy. A fool.

But golfers would view it differently.

I'd say Warne personified what a true golfer is. Honest. Brave. Dignified.

What Warne did was embody man's intrinsic nature never to give up. His feat was an indelible reminder that man's journey is not measured by how much one has gained materially, but rather, how material a noble thing is to anyone of us.

Dumping 36 balls into a lake is not an easy thing to do. Warne's flight mates must have probably tried to stop him from hitting another ball after he had failed on his 7th, 8th, 9th or 10th attempt maybe.

Like all golfers playing a par-3, Warne had a mission: To get to the green. Failing that would mean demeaning one's self.

And what would be a failure under such circumstances?

Not doing it the right way. Like, after hitting into the water several times and next deciding to drop a ball illegally somewhere, maybe on a spot away from the lake that is probably near the green. Cowards abound in this crazy world.

> Warne personified what a **true** golfer is. Honest. Brave. Dignified

Warne not stopping until he got into the green exceeded human patience.

How many times have we seen failed attempts to explore the outer space, even costing lives in the process such as the Columbia tragedy of some years back?

Warne personified the astronaut's credo: The future belongs to the brave.

If he wasn't that brave, Warne would not have kept on trying. It did not matter that he hit the green on his 37th tee shot. It mattered that he went on trying.

It is said that after completing his round—meaning he completed 18 holes—Warne was so exhausted that he went straight home. He skipped the awarding ceremonies. Had I been around, I would have personally fetched him myself from his house and offered him not only a toast at the awarding ceremonies but also an award for bravery and excellence.

Last year, Del Monte received a letter from Douglas Warne, Robert Warne's son. The letter is now in the hands of Mike Comique, Del Monte's golf club chairman.

The young Warne said he was born in 1932. He wrote: "I noticed in the Internet that in 1937 or 1938, my father had dumped 36 balls into a lake and that was memorialized by a stone monument to celebrate his dubious feat. I imagine that has yet to be exceeded. Does the stone still exist?"

His letter was accompanied by copies of "The Bugle," a Del Monte newsletter that was among the memorabilia of Robert Warne. A photo of the children of several Del Monte employees was published in one issue.

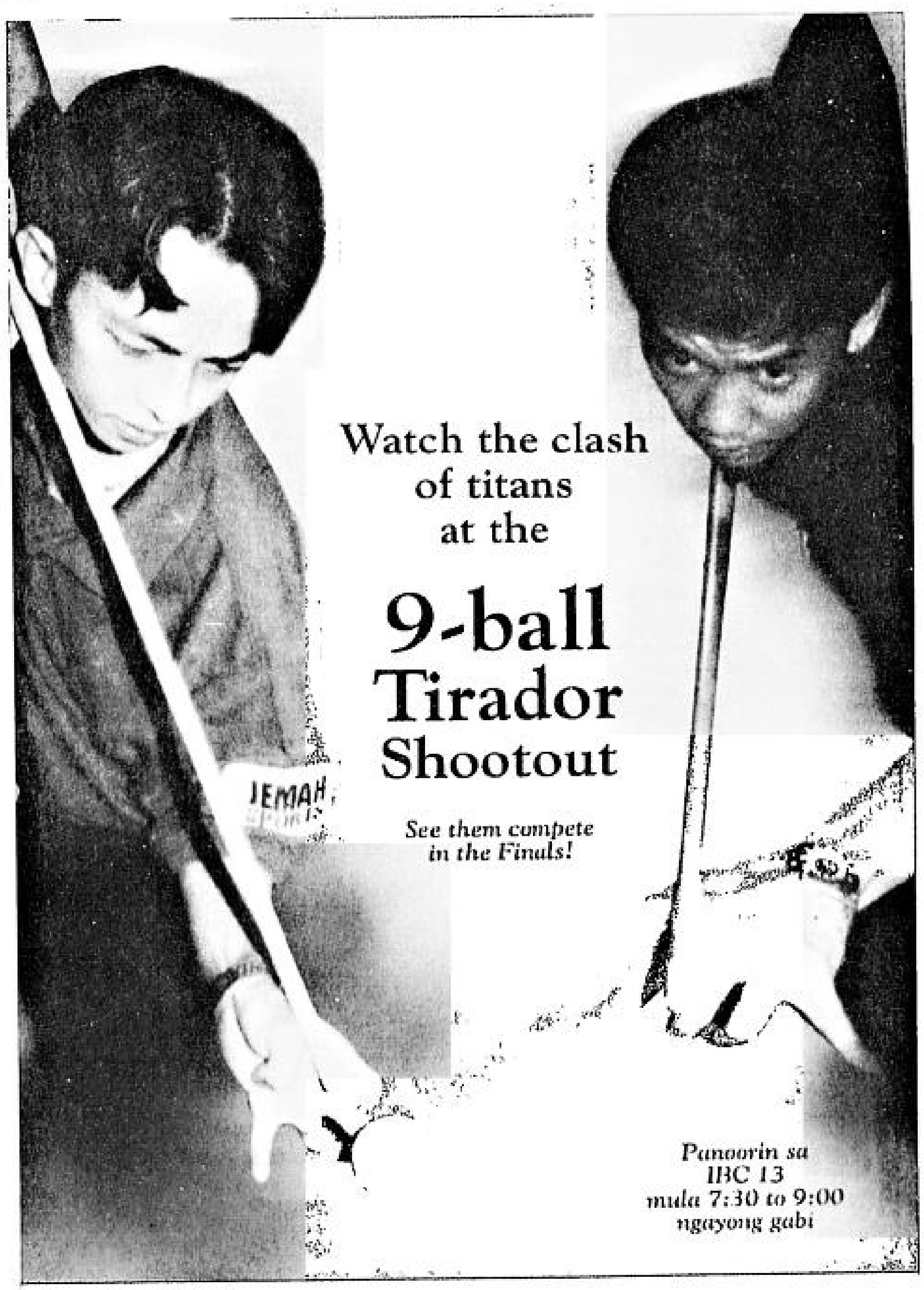
Douglas sent his letter from Kailua, Hawaii.

If I may make a suggestion, why don't you invite Douglas Warne to come visit Del Monte? Douglas is 72 years old now. It'd be nice to see him. Tears might probably stream down his cheeks when he sees that slab of stone about his Dad's feat.

Do invite him to come, Mike? He'll be good copy.

***

FASTBREAK. For me, the PAL Interclub has always been an occasion worth looking forward to. It affords me the chance to renew ties with nice fellas like Nimrod Quinonez, the sports editor of Cebu's The Freeman. This year, it also gave me the chance to meet old buddies Gov. Manny Piñol of North Cotabato, Bert Roman of Chicago, Art Empamano, Tony Dacudao of Davao/Lumbia and Clifford Celdran, among others, of this charming city by the sea. Also Pinky Mag-iba, the ever efficient secretary of PAL Corporate Communications chief Rollie Estabillo.



Watch the clash of titans at the
9-ball Tirador Shootout
See them compete in the Finals!
Panoorin sa IBC 13 mula 7:30 to 9:00 ngayong gabi
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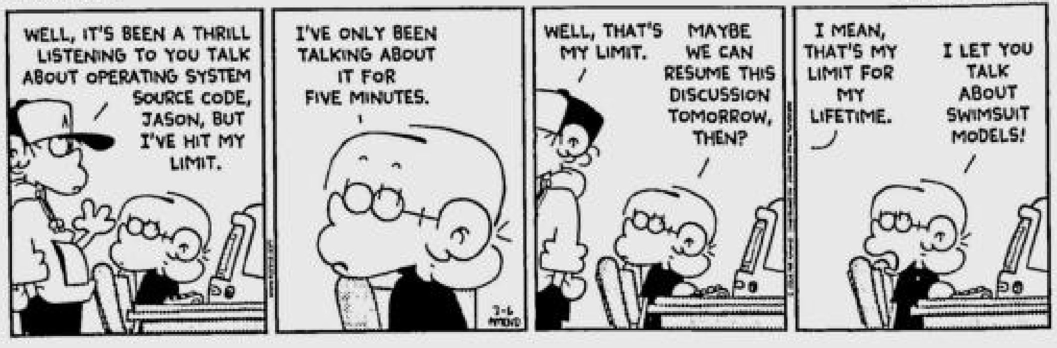
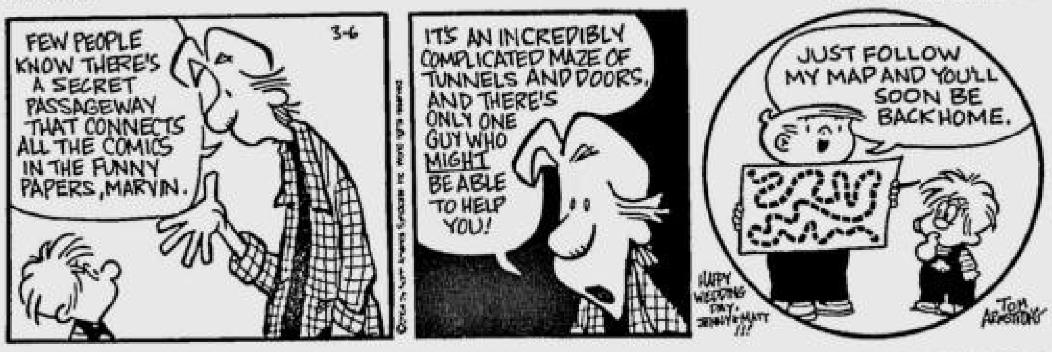
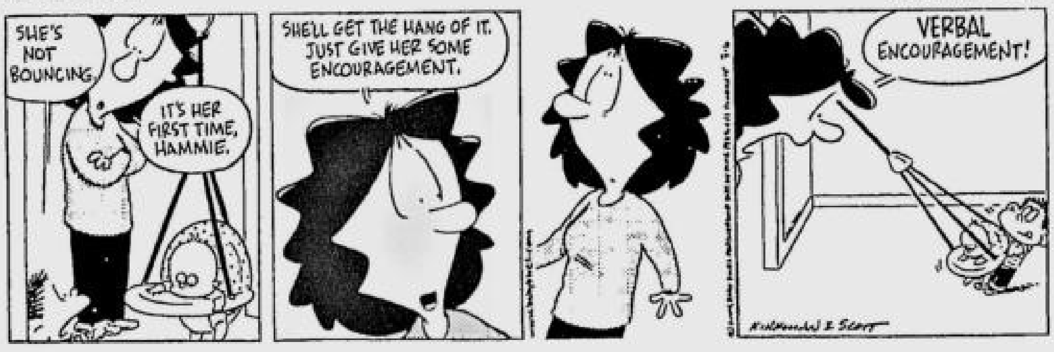
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


WELL, IT'S BEEN A THRILL LISTENING TO YOU TALK ABOUT OPERATING SYSTEM SOURCE CODE, JASON, BUT I'VE HIT MY LIMIT.
I'VE ONLY BEEN TALKING ABOUT IT FOR FIVE MINUTES.
3-6 AMEND
WELL, THAT'S MY LIMIT.
MAYBE WE CAN RESUME THIS DISCUSSION TOMORROW, THEN?
I MEAN, THAT'S MY LIMIT FOR MY LIFETIME.
I LET YOU TALK ABOUT SWIMSUIT MODELS!

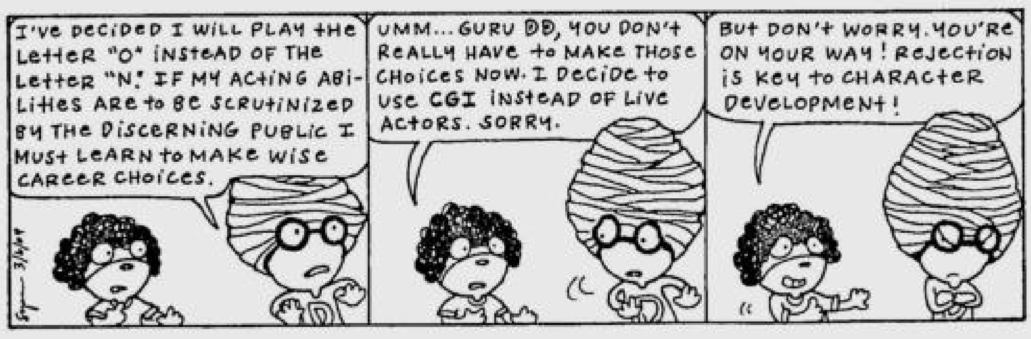
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


3-6
FEW PEOPLE KNOW THERE'S A SECRET PASSAGEWAY THAT CONNECTS ALL THE COMICS IN THE FUNNY PAPERS, MARVIN.
IT'S AN INCREDIBLY COMPLICATED MAZE OF TUNNELS AND DOORS, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE GUY WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU!
JUST FOLLOW MY MAP AND YOU'LL SOON BE BACK HOME.
HAPPY WEDDING DAY, JENNY & MATT !!!
TOM ARMSTRONG

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


SHE'S NOT BOUNCING.
IT'S HER FIRST TIME, HAMMIE.
SHE'LL GET THE HANG OF IT. JUST GIVE HER SOME ENCOURAGEMENT.
VERBAL ENCOURAGEMENT!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'VE DECIDED I WILL PLAY THE LETTER "O" INSTEAD OF THE LETTER "N." IF MY ACTING ABILITIES ARE TO BE SCRUTINIZED BY THE DISCERNING PUBLIC I MUST LEARN TO MAKE WISE CAREER CHOICES.
UMM... GURU DD, YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO MAKE THOSE CHOICES NOW. I DECIDE TO USE CGI INSTEAD OF LIVE ACTORS. SORRY.
BUT DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY! REJECTION IS KEY TO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a highly developed sense of beauty and appreciation of the arts. You're devoted to whatever you embrace. You are inspired by beauty to the point that it affects your life. You often project your own view of things onto the world around you. The year ahead favors marriage, partnerships and all social occasions. Enjoy!

Birthdate of: Shaquille O'Neal, basketball player; Tom Arnold, actor; Michelangelo, artist/architect.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): If you feel tension or restlessness today, it's because this is a Full Moon. This particular Full Moon will trigger old behavior patterns within you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Definitely be patient with children today. You'll also have to be patient with romantic interests. Today's Full Moon could make you a bit demanding in these areas.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today's Full Moon might bring stress to family situations or discussions with parents. Remain calm and patient. (One person can favorably affect the entire family.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Naturally, you'll feel today's Full Moon. It might make you impatient in your communications with others. But you don't have to be if you're aware of this.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You want to buy something, and yet you want to save your money. Naturally, you can't do both. This is like trying to have your cake and eat it too.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): It's hard to know whose best interests to put first—your own or those of someone else? Try to make your success the success of others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Co-workers often come to you for advice at work. That's because you have a good understanding of human nature, and you're also a sympathetic, kind person. Listen to others today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today's Full Moon might aggravate your relations with children, lovers, friends and anything having to do with the entertainment world. Your only choice is to mellow out.

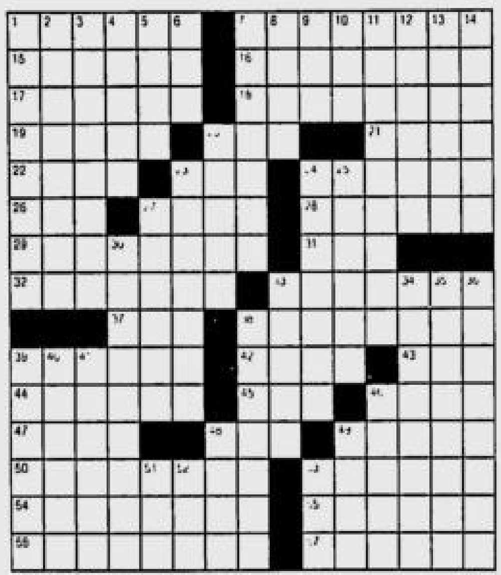
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Look for ways to be supportive to family members today. The head of the family or a parent might need you now. Be as kind to others as you hope they will be to you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Despite your strong desire to communicate to others now, it's important that you also listen! Remember: You can't hear what people are saying when you're talking.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Money issues are a bit confusing today. (Today's Full Moon highlights your finances.) Previous problems will probably diminish in the next few days.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Although three planets are in your sign now, this Full Moon opposes you. Give up trying to prove something to others. Just let it be.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Tom Pruce
Chicago, IL
3/6/04

ACROSS
1 Half
7 Missing narrowly
15 Founder of the Shakers in America
16 Word with anthem or interest
17 Sagebrush State
18 Stephen King novel
19 Encourages in crime
20 Mimic
21 Hairless
22 "Auld Lang __"
23 Cool or groovy
24 Zero of Broadway
26 Boozer
27 Tender
28 Blood conduit
29 Consecrated with oil
31 SHO competition
32 Sunday speeches
33 Mint workers
37 "The Gold Bug" penner
38 Short cape
39 Young salmon
42 Mine products
43 Jug handle
44 Pester
45 Non-clerical
46 Naked
47 Ken or Lena
48 So far
49 Taboo acts
50 Cute feet
53 Permeable
54 Forgotten
55 Strongly disinclined
56 Unique
57 Mouths off

DOWN
1 Bull Run by another name
2 Single file
3 Originator
4 Make joyous
5 Turner and Danson
6 Indeed
7 Cut with quick strokes
8 Carol of "Taxi"
9 Possessive pronoun
10 Duran Duran song
11 Wyatt Earp's town
12 Existing naturally
13 Hammer wielder
14 Willingly
20 Buenos __, Arg.
23 Relative warmth
24 John of "Frasier"
25 Satellite courses
27 Noses
30 Pacemaker installer?
33 Jeweler's weight
34 Parker and Powell
35 Stir up again
36 Gives prominence to
38 Bothers
39 Skyrocketed
40 Moses or Dorothy
41 Camden Yards player
46 Dullards
48 Hankerings
49 Stellar explosion
51 Mineo of "Rebel Without a Cause"
52 Ill temper
53 Fathers

Friday's Puzzle Solved

U	S	E	R	■	P	A	L	E	■	A	S	P	E	N
M	A	R	E	■	E	M	I	T	■	S	T	E	R	E
B	R	A	G	■	K	O	L	A	■	L	A	P	I	S
R	A	T	A	T	O	U	I	L	L	E	■	P	C	T
A	N	O	T	H	E	R	■	■	A	E	N	E	A	S
■	■	■	T	I	S	■	S	T	U	P	O	R	■	■
U	R	B	A	N	■	Y	A	R	D	■	S	P	A	M
F	U	R	■	G	O	U	L	A	S	H	■	O	B	I
O	N	U	S	■	D	R	A	Y	■	O	A	T	E	R
■	■	N	E	R	E	I	D	■	G	A	S	■	■	■
A	S	S	A	I	L	■	■	U	N	R	A	V	E	L
N	E	W	■	O	L	L	A	P	O	D	R	I	D	A
G	L	I	N	T	■	I	T	E	M	■	U	N	I	S
E	M	C	E	E	■	E	R	N	E	■	L	E	T	S
R	A	K	E	D	■	D	A	D	S	■	E	S	S	O

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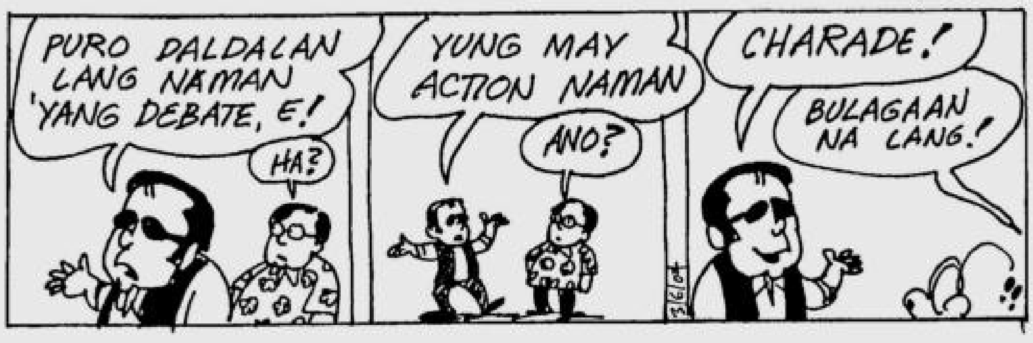
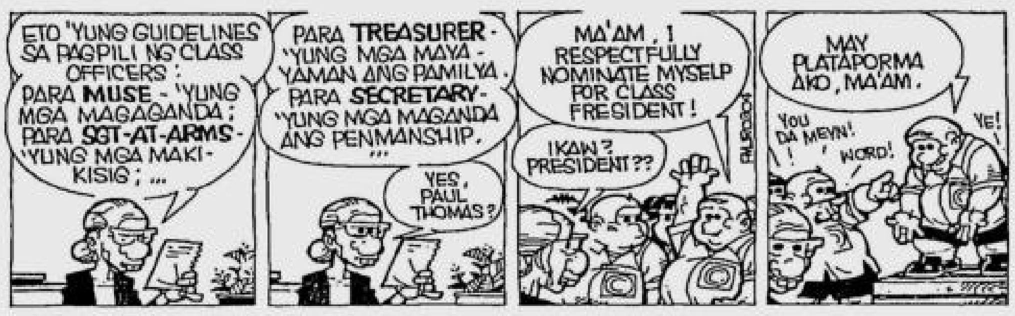
3/6/04

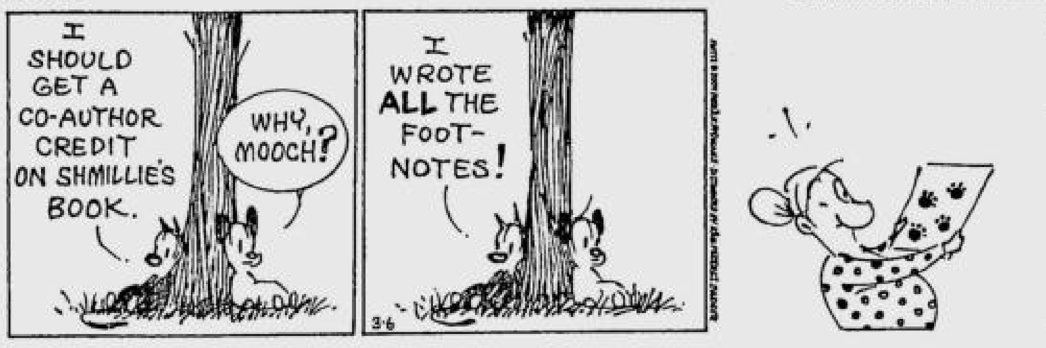
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


PURO DALDALAN LANG NAMAN 'YANG DEBATE, E!
HA?
YUNG MAY ACTION NAMAN
ANO?
3/6/04
CHARADE!
BULAGAAN NA LANG!

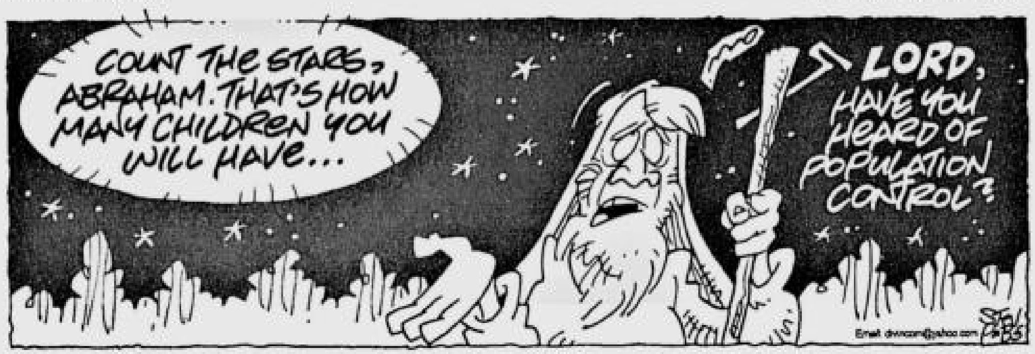
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ETO 'YUNG GUIDELINES SA PAGPILI NG CLASS OFFICERS: PARA MUSE - 'YUNG MGA MAGAGANDA; PARA SGT-AT-ARMS - 'YUNG MGA MAKI-KISIG; ...
PARA TREASURER - 'YUNG MGA MAYA-YAMAN ANG PAMILYA. PARA SECRETARY - 'YUNG MGA MAGANDA ANG PENMANSHIP. ...
YES, PAUL THOMAS?
MA'AM, I RESPECTFULLY NOMINATE MYSELF FOR CLASS PRESIDENT!
IKAW? PRESIDENT??
MAY PLATAPORMA AKO, MA'AM.
YOU DA MEYN!
WORD!
YE!

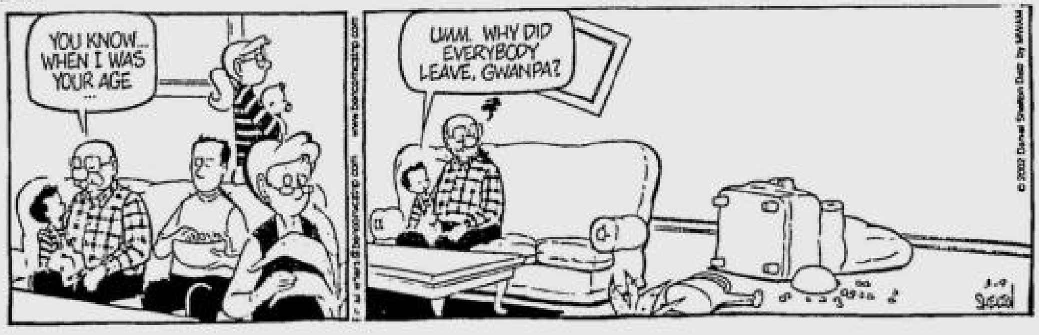
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I SHOULD GET A CO-AUTHOR CREDIT ON SHMILLIE'S BOOK.
WHY, MOOCH?
I WROTE ALL THE FOOT-NOTES!
3-6

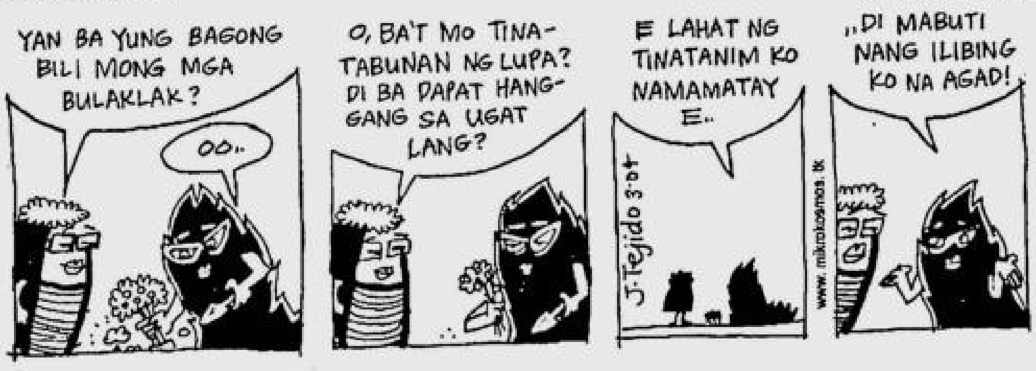
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


COUNT THE STARS, ABRAHAM. THAT'S HOW MANY CHILDREN YOU WILL HAVE...
LORD, HAVE YOU HEARD OF POPULATION CONTROL?

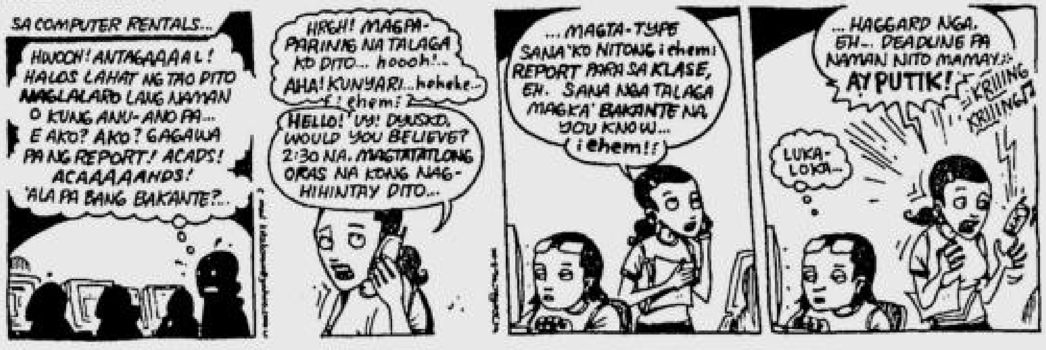
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU KNOW... WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE ...
UMM. WHY DID EVERYBODY LEAVE, GWANPA?
www.bencomicstrip.com

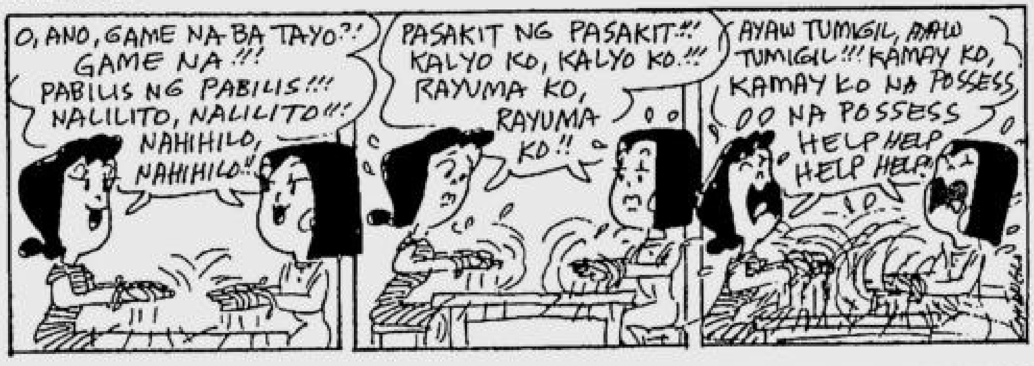
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


YAN BA YUNG BAGONG BILI MONG MGA BULAKLAK?
OO..
O, BA'T MO TINA-TABUNAN NG LUPA? DI BA DAPAT HANG-GANG SA UGAT LANG?
E LAHAT NG TINATANIM KO NAMAMATAY E..
J. Tejido 3-04
..DI MABUTI NANG ILIBING KO NA AGAD!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

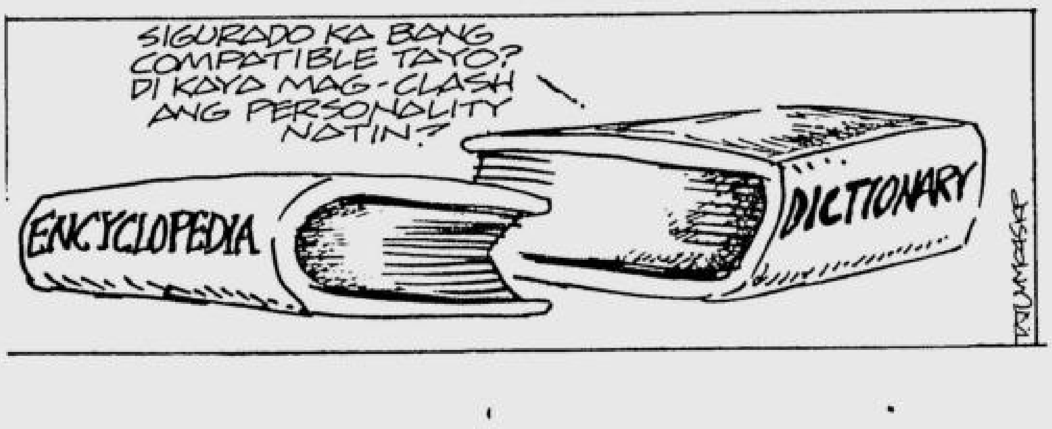
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


SA COMPUTER RENTALS...
HWOOH! ANTAGAAAAAL! HALOS LAHAT NG TAO DITO NAGLALARO LANG NAMAN O KUNG ANU-ANO PA... E AKO? AKO? GAGAWA PA NG REPORT! ACADS! ACAAAAAAHDS! 'ALA PA BANG BAKANTE?..
HRGH! MAGPA-PARINIG NA TALAGA KO DITO... hoooh!.. AHA! KUNYARI...hehehe.. ¡ehem!
HELLO! 'UY! DYUSKO, WOULD YOU BELIEVE? 2:30 NA. MAGTATATLONG ORAS NA KONG NAG-HIHINTAY DITO...
...MAGTA-TYPE SANA 'KO NITONG ¡ehem! REPORT PARA SA KLASE, EH. SANA NGA TALAGA MAGKA' BAKANTE NA, YOU KNOW... ¡ehem!!
...HAGGARD NGA. EH... DEADLINE PA NAMAN NITO MAMAY..!- AY PUTIK!
KRIIING KRIIING
LUKA-LOKA..

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


O, ANO, GAME NA BA TAYO?!
GAME NA!!!
PABILIS NG PABILIS!!! NALILITO, NALILITO!!!
NAHIHILO, NAHIHILO!!
PASAKIT NG PASAKIT!!! KALYO KO, KALYO KO.!!!
RAYUMA KO, RAYUMA KO!!
AYAW TUMIGIL, AYAW TUMIGIL!!! KAMAY KO, KAMAY KO NA POSSESS, OO NA POSSESS
HELP HELP HELP HELP

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SIGURADO KA BANG COMPATIBLE TAYO? DI KAYA MAG-CLASH ANG PERSONALITY NATIN?
ENCYCLOPEDIA
DICTIONARY

Rañola on top

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—National Master Yves Rañola beat NM Emmanuel Senador in 48 moves of an English Opening to stay on top with two others after Round 4 of the 3rd La Union Open Chess Championships at the Diego Silang Hall of the La Union Provincial Capitol here yesterday.

Rañola, a BS Math graduate of the Far Eastern University, now has a perfect four points, the same output of 10th seed Fide Master Fernie Donguines and NM Ronald Llavanes.

Former national junior champion IM-candidate Darwin Laylo shared the limelight when he upset top seed Grandmaster Eugene Torre and led the group of 3.5 pointers that also includes SEA Games triple-gold medalist and 2nd seed GM-candidate Mark Paragua, 3rd seed IM Richard Bitoon, 5th seed IM Barlo Nadera and 14th seed NM Rolly Martinez.

Torre stayed at 2.5 points.

"Persistence paid off," said the 31-year-old Ranola, a former rock band member turned chess instructor.

Llavanes stunned IM Jayson Gonzales, a member of the SEA Games rapid team champion, in 49 moves of another English Opening while Donguines, 1994 Moscow Olympic bronze medalist, beat Fide Master Adrian Pacis. *NM Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

S'woods net camp

THE FIL-ESTATE Sports Foundation Inc. (FESFI)-Manila Southwoods Tennis Academy will hold a summer tennis camp at the Bramante Tennis Courts at Renaissance Towers in Pasig and Manila Southwoods Sports Club in Carmona, Cavite beginning March 29.

To be conducted by former Philippine Davis Cup team coach Manny Tecson, the camp is aimed at developing a new generation of local tennis players through extensive and scientific training at a world-class facility.

For inquiries, call Linda at 938-9522 or Jerry at 0917-8981516.

Derby on

THOUSANDS of cockfighting buffs are expected to witness the "Battle of the Heavyweights 7-cock One Day Derby" tonight at the Las Piñas Coliseum. The event will be sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000.

'It will be an exciting duel among big-time participants and one will be allowed to back out until its's over. It's a fight-to-the finish," said *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio, one of the 20 participants.

Lawyer Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza of the Winning Time Jobo entry will field their winners in the recent 2004 World Slasher Cup. For inquiries, call 873-1040 and 0920-5609404.

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1 DRAGON VS. NINJA
2 ANNIE B
3 MILAN
4 COLD MOUNTAIN
5 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
6 GOTHIKA
7 DUPLEX
8 TORQUE

SM CITY CEBU
2313876

1 THEATRICAL DREAMS
2 COLD MOUNTAIN
3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 CHASING LIBERTY
5 ANNIE B
6 21 GRAMS
7 MILAN
8 RUNAWAY JURY

SM CITY BACOOR
4173868

1 DRAGON VS. NINJA
2 DUPLEX
3 TORQUE
4 MILAN
5 GOTHIKA
6 ANNIE B
7 KUYA
8 U-BELT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8592884

1 COLD MOUNTAIN
2 CHASING LIBERTY
3 ANNIE B
T4XAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1 MILAN
2 GOTHIKA
3 TORQUE
4 ANNIE B.

SM BICUTAN
7763055

1 TORQUE
2 ANNIE B
3 DUPLEX
4 GOTHIKA

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4464505

1 RUNAWAY JURY
2 PELIKULA AT LIPUNAN
3 THE GATHERING
4EXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

SM STA. MESA
7149522 • 7161456

1 MILAN
2 COLD MOUNTAIN
3 GOTHIKA
4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5 TORQUE
6 DRAGON VS. NINJA
7 ANNIE B.
8 BONE SNATCHER
9 DUPLEX
10 WATER DEMON

SM SOUTHMALL
8066888

1 NIGHTMARE
2 DUPLEX
3 GOTHIKA
4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5 DUDA/DOUBT
6 KUYA
7 ANNIE B
8 TORQUE
9 MILAN
10 DRAGON VS. NINJA

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 DRAGON VS. NINJA
3 DUPLEX
4 TORQUE
5 BONE SNATCHER
6 MILAN
7 GOTHIKA
8 ANNIE B.
9 COLD MOUNTAIN
10 KUYA
11 U-BELT
12 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE

SM CITY MARILAO

1 ANNIE B.
2 KUYA
3 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
4 COLD MOUNTAIN

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422

1 U-BELT
2 RESERVED
3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 WRONG TURN
5 CHASING LIBERTY
6 COLD MOUNTAIN
7 RESERVED
8 MILAN

SM MEGAMALL
6331901

1 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6366000
2 TORQUE
3 LOST IN TRANSLATION
4 DUPLEX
5 BONE SNATCHER
6 COLD MOUNTAIN
7 NIGHTMARE
8 ANNIE B.
9 MILAN
10 RING: THE SPIRAL
11 DRAGON VS. NINJA
12 CONE SNATCHER

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1 TORQUE
2 GOTHIKA
3 MILAN
4 ANNIE B

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1 GOTHIKA
2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
3 COLD MOUNTAIN
4 TORQUE
5 DUPLEX
6 BONE SNATCHER
7 DRAGON VS. NINJA
8 KUYA
9 MILAN
10 NIGHTMARE
11 RING: THE SPIRAL
12 ANNIE B

SM CITY DAVAO
2976998

1 RUNAWAY JURY
2 21 GRAMS
3 MILAN
4 HAUNTED MANSION
5 IN THE CUT
6 HAUNTED OFFICE

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

1 GOTHIKA
2 RUNAWAY JURY
3 KUYA
4 MILAN
5 LOST IN TRANSLATION
6 ANNIE B

SM CITY LUCENA
(043) 7108677-80

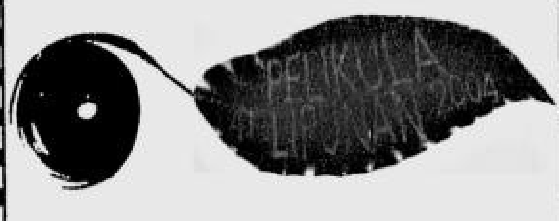
1 DUPLEX
2 IN THE CUT
3 MILAN
4 THE GATHERING

THE PODIUM CINEMA

1 TORQUE
10:05FS/10:30
MF/12:25/2:20/4:156:10/
8:05/9:30 LFS/10:00
LMF/11:25 END

2 GOTHIKA
10:35 FS/11:05
MF/1:15/3:25/5:35/
7:45/9:25 LFS/9:55
LMF/11:35 END

For Seat Reservation call 633 8976
LATE NIGHT SCREENING
DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS



SM Baguio MAR 6 | saturday

11:00am | MFI Shorts
1:30pm | Gay and Lesbian Works
4:00pm | Perfumed Nightmare by Kidlat Tahimik
6:30pm | Amorres Perros by Carlos Carrera
9:00pm | Greenlights by Robert H. Lieberman

Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ALL DIGITAL SOUND
AYALA CINEMAS
PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 ANNIE B.	1 TORQUE	Art Film 1 GOTHIKA 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 GOTHIKA 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50, 12:00	THX 1 GOTHIKA
2 TORQUE	2 DUPLEX	2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 12:50, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50, 11:20	2 DUPLEX
3 MILAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 LOST IN TRANSLATION 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30	3 TORQUE
4 GOTHIKA	4 THE BONE SNATCHER		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 DUPLEX 1:20, 3:20, 5:15, 7:10, 9:05, 11:00	4 ANNIE B
	5 COLD MOUNTAIN		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 TORQUE 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00, 12:00	5 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
	6 GOTHIKA			
	7 MYSTIC RIVER			

For sreening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting **SURESEATS GB3** or **SURESEATS G4** and send to **2333**. Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING
EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DTS) MILAN
2 (SDDS) HAUNTED MANSION
3 (DTS) TORQUE
4 GOLD (DTS) SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) COLD MOUNTAIN
6 GOLD (SDDS) GOTHIKA
7 GOLD (DOLBY) DUPLEX
8 [illegible] ANNIE B
9 [illegible] NIGHTMARE
10 [illegible] DRAGON VS NINJA

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY) SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
2 (DOLBY) TORQUE
3 (DOLBY) GOTHIKA
4 (DOLBY) SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 . 833.3274

1 ANNIE B
2 U BELT
3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
2 CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
3
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)
5

ANNIE B
TORQUE
U BELT

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1 DRAGON VS. NINJA
2 U BELT
3 ANNIE B
4 MILAN
5 GOTHIKA
6 TORQUE

M star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas)
tel 873.5004

1 GHOST HOUSE
2 TWIN EFFECTS

PREMIERE CINEMA
(Makati City) tel 892.2503
THX

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 KUYA
2 HAUNTED MANSION

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1 ANNIE B
2
3
4

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588

5
6
7 (DTS)
8 (SDDS)
9 (DOLBY)

RESERVE

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1
2
3
4 (SDDS)
5
6 (DOLBY)
7 (DTS)
8
9

U BELT
ANNIE B
MILAN
DRAGON VS. NINJA
KUYA
TORQUE
GOTHIKA
WATER DEMON
GHOST HOUSE

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1
2 (SDDS)
3 (DTS)
4 (DOLBY)
5

RESERVE

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1
2
3 (DTS)
4
5 (SDDS)

MILAN
ANNIE B
WATER DEMON
U BELT

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1 RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson
Lords

MARKETMALL
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1
2
3
4

ANNIE B
TORQUE
GOTHIKA
DRAGON VS. NINJA

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY) TORQUE
2 NIGHTMARE
3 GOTHIKA
4 ANNIE B
5 U BELT

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 U BELT
2 MILAN

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT Araneta Center
ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7
Tel No 911-2101 Loc. 821-8342-8400

1 CLOSED
2 CLOSED
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL) ANNIE B
4 (SDDS) GOTHICA
5 (DTS) TORQUE
6 DRAGON VS. NINJA
7 WATER DEMON

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX) RUN AWAY JURY
2 ANNIE B
3 (DTS ES) GOTHIKA
4 WHISING STAIRS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1
2
3 (DOLBY)
4 (DTS)

KUYA
ANNIE B
GOTHIKA
RUN AWAY JURY

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1
2
3 (DOLBY)
4 (DTS)

ANNIE B
KUYA
HAUNTED MANSION
CHASING LIBERTY

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1
2
3 (DTS)

WATER DEMON
GOTHIKA
ANNIE B

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1
2 (DTS)
3 (DOLBY)
4

WATER DEMON
ANNIE B
GOTHIKA
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1
2 (DOLBY)
3 (DTS)
4

ANNIE B
GOTHIKA
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
WATER DEMON

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1
2
3 (DOLBY)

KUYA
CHASING LIBERTY
HAUNTED MANSION

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1
2
3 (DOLBY)
4 (DTS)

ANNIE B
CHASING LIBERTY
KUYA
WISHING STAIRS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1
2
3

ANNIE B
HAUNTED MANSION
RUN AWAY JURY

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)
2
3
4 (DTS)

WATER DEMON
PALIGAYAHIN MO AKO
U BELT
GHOST HOUSE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)
2
3 (DTS)
4
5

GOTHIKA
ANNIE B
WATER DEMON
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
GHOST HOUSE

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1 ANNIE B
2 GHOST HOUSE

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1
2
3

GOTHIKA
ANNIE B
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1
2
3 (DTS)
4 (DOLBY)

U BELT
KUYA
CHASING LIBERTY
ANNIE B

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1 (DTS) RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 U BELT
2 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
3 COLD MOUNTAIN
4 ANNIE B

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1 ANNIE B
2 U BELT

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY dts SDDS

FESTIVAL CINEMA
Level 4
Festival Supermall
Filinvest - Alabang
Tel 85035-71 to 72
schedule subject to change without prior notice

julia roberts
mona lisa smile

NOW SHOWING

Pistons rip T. Blazers

NEW YORK—Rasheed Wallace guided the Detroit Pistons to an easy 83-68 win over the Trail Blazers with 13 points and nine rebounds in his return to Portland on Thursday.

The Trail Blazers were totally outplayed in losing their fourth straight game as Wallace made his first appearance against the team that traded him last month.

Wallace was dealt to Atlanta but played just one game for the Hawks before they dealt him to the Pistons.

He was greeted with a mix of boos and cheers when introduced but the fans turned their wrath on the home team later in the game as Portland struggled on offense.

Detroit has benefited from his presence, as the Pistons have won five of six games and won their 39th game of the season on Thursday.

Knicks hire Jabbar

In New York, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the legendary center who won six National Basketball Association championships, signed as a staff member for the New York Knicks and will handle scouting, player evaluation and other duties with his hometown club.

Reuters, AFP

Complete results:

Miami 104, Milwaukee 98; Sacramento 114, Philadelphia 105; Detroit 83, Portland 68.

Araneta Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
Ali 2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
Ali 3	ANNIE B.
Ali 4	GOTHIKA
Ali 5	TORQUE
Ali 6	DRAGON VS. NINJA
Ali 7	WATER DEMON

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ARANETA COLISEUM

MAR 6	BB. PILIPINAS CORONATION NIGHT
MAR 7	PBA: STA LUCIA VS. COKE
MAR 10	PBA: REDBULL VS. SHELL
MAR 12	SONG BIRD & SONG WRITER REPEAT
MAR 13	PBA: PUREFOODS VS. STA. LUCIA
MAR 14	PBA: GINEBRA VS. COKE
MAR 16	NCA 7-COCK DEBY

FOR TICKETS, CALL TICKETNET AT 911-6555

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MAPUSOK / HAPDI
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	ANNIE B
B	
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KUYA
CINEMA-2	U-BELT
CINEMA-3	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DUPLEX
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	WATER DEMON
CINEMA-6	GHOST HOUSE
CINEMA-7	TUKAAN
CINEMA-8	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-12	DRAGON VS. NINJA
CINEMA-14	ANNIE B
CINEMA-15	MILAN

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-1	ANNIE B
CINEMA-2	KUYA
CINEMA-4	WISHING STAIRS

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

THEATRE MALL

GREENHILLS

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

NOW SHOWING

Cinema	Film	Times	Rating
CINEMA 1	GOTHIKA	11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00	R13
CINEMA 2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	12:10, 2:55, 5:40, 8:30	R13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA • 7224496

MUSIC MUSEUM

MAR. 5,6,12,13	"MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL"	8:00PM
MAR 17 & 18	"WILLIE NEP 4 PRESIDENT"	9:00PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

For inquiries, call:

687-6963 • 687-6972

RESERVED SEATING

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Cinema	Film	Times	Rating
1	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	11:03, 2:20, 5:10, 8:00, 10:50	R-13
2	TORQUE	11:00, 1:10, 3:20 5:30, 10:40, 9:50	PG-13
3	GOTHIKA	11:15, 1:30, 3:50 6:10, 8:30, 10:50	R-13
4	DUPLEX	11:45, 1:45, 3:45 5:45, 7:45, 9:45	R-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

Film	Rating	Times
LOST IN TRANSLATION	PG13	12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
DUPLEX	PG13	12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00
TORQUE	PG13	11:15, 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55, 10:20
GOTHIKA	R13	1:20, 3:40, 6:00, 8:20, 10:30
MYSTIC RIVER	R13	1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:40
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	R13	12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:40, 10:10

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

NOW SHOWING

HANEP SA ACTION... WALANG CAMERA TRICKS.
LABANAN NG MGA MATATAPANG... KAKASA KA BA?

From YUEN WO-PING
the action director of THE MATRIX.

SHAOLIN KUNG FU ORIGINATED IN 3RD CENTURY CHINA. ★ NINJITSU ORIGINATED IN 9TH CENTURY JAPAN.

WHICH TECHNIQUE IS THE BEST?

CHINA'S NATIONAL WU-SHU CHAMPION
SHI-XIAO-LONG
4-TIME JAPAN NINJITSU CHAMPION
KEN WONG
DRAGON VERSUS NINJA

MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

GOLDEN GLOBE WINNER DIANE KEATON BEST ACTRESS • COMEDY

ACADEMYAWARD NOMINEE DIANE KEATON BEST ACTRESS

WINNER NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW BEST ACTRESS Diane Keaton

"...I LOVED IT. DIANE KEATON, AN OSCAR NOMINATION, SHE COULD GO ALL THE WAY. THE FILM IS THAT GOOD, IT IS THAT MUCH FUN."

"NICHOLSON IS HILARIOUS...'SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE' IS SOMETHING SPECIAL."

"SHARP, WITTY, AND DEEP-DOWN FUNNY, 'SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE' IS ONE OF THE BEST ADULT ROMANTIC COMEDIES OF THE YEAR."

SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE

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Family Consumers Choice Award 2003

NOW SHOWING

GALLERIA 632-9115 to 16 / 687-0593

Cinema	Film	Times
CINEMA 1 THX	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	10:40, 1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:45
2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:45, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
3	LOST IN TRANSLATION	11:05, 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30 DTS
4	DUPLEX	11:40, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40, 9:40 DOLBY DIGITAL
5	TORQUE	10:50, 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL
6	GOTHIKA	10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40 SDDS
7	GAWI: THE NIGHTMARE	12:05, 2:15, 4:25, 6:40, 9:00
8	COLD MOUNTAIN	12:10, 3:00, 6:00, 9:00 DOLBY
9	MILAN	11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 DOLBY
10	DRAGON VS. NINJA	12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P80 for one level cinemas
Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA 526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

Cinema	Film	Times
1	TORQUE	11:00, 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:40 DOLBY DIGITAL EX
2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 DOLBY
3	MILAN	11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50 DOLBY
4	DRAGON VS. NINJA	11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50
5	ANNIE B.	10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50 DOLBY
6	DUPLEX	10:20, 12:15, 2:10, 4:05, 6:00, 7:55, 9:50 SDDS
7	GOTHIKA	10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40 DTS

Big R Supercenter **METRO EAST** 682-8193/99 / 682-8280

Cinema	Film	Times
1	DUPLEX	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY
2	GOTHIKA	10:45, 1:20, 3:55, 6:30, 9:05 SDDS
3	TORQUE	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY
4	DRAGON VS. NINJA	11:25, 2:00, 4:25, 6:50, 9:15
5	COLD MOUNTAIN	10:30, 12:15, 3:00, 5:45, 9:00
6	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	10:20, 12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00 DOLBY
7	MILAN	10:35, 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 9:00 DTS
8	ANNIE B.	10:30, 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

Big R Supercenter **NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW** 935-3220 / 31

Cinema	Film	Times
1	TORQUE	11:25, 1:55, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:55 DOLBY
2	DUPLEX	11:20, 1:10, 3:00, 4:50, 6:40, 8:30 DOLBY
3	ANNIE B.	11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
4	COLD MOUNTAIN	11:55, 2:40, 5:25, 8:30 DOLBY
5	DRAGON VS. NINJA	11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
6	GOTHIKA	11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
7	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	11:15, 1:35, 3:55, 6:15, 8:35
8	GAWI: THE NIGHTMARE	11:40, 1:45, 3:50, 5:55, 8:10

Citisquare **MALABON** 288-0985/2575

1	TORQUE
2	DRAGON VS. NINJA
3	ANNIE B.
4	GOTHIKA

big Supercenter **CAINTA** 240-4661

1	TORQUE
2	MILAN
3	ANNIE B.
4	GOTHIKA

Big R Supercenter **STA. ROSA** Laguna (049)837-0907

1	MILAN
2	GOTHIKA
3	ANNIE B.
4	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5	GHOST HOUSE

Big R Supercenter **LIPA** 757-3684 / 312-5870

1	COLD MOUNTAIN
2	ANNIE B.
3	U-BELT
4	MILAN
5	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE

Big R Supercenter **DASMARIÑAS** 852-2125

1	U-BELT
2	GHOST HOUSE
3	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
4	MILAN
5	ANNIE B.

Big R Supercenter **STARMILLS** San Fernando, Pampanga 875-1927 / 961-5270

1	DUPLEX
2	MILAN
3	LOST IN TRANSLATION
4	ANNIE B.
5	GOTHIKA
6 THX STANDARD	RUNAWAY JURY

IMUS 471-8188 / 875-5858

1	TORQUE
2	DRAGON VS. NINJA
3	ANNIE B.
4 DTS	GOTHIKA
5	MILAN
6	WATER DEMON

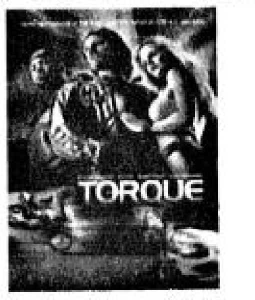
BACOLOD 441-0458/59

1	COLD MOUNTAIN
2	HAUNTED MANSION
3	IN THE CUT
4	CHASING LIBERTY
5	DUPLEX
6	MILAN

ILOILO 336-8070/78

1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	CHASING LIBERTY
3	COLD MOUNTAIN
4	WRONG TURN
5	U-BELT
6	MAGIC KITCHEN

See it at its BEST



at ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD

ADVANCE SCREENING

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Robinsons Movieworld GALLERIA Cinema 6

March 8 and 9, 2004 (Monday & Tuesday) 7:30 PM

This screening is STRICTLY INVITATIONAL

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Boysen prevails

BOYSEN Paints served notice of its title aspiration by beating Davies Paints, 89-75, at the start of the 2004 Aces-Ironcon Builders and Development Corp. basketball tournament at the Tanduay gym in Quiapo, Manila.

Rudolf Go scored a game-high 33 points for Boysen, which outscored Davies in the pivotal stretch in the fourth quarter to pull off the win. Randy Go, Jonathan Galano and Ed Casares also scored 11 points apiece for Boysen.

Franklin Lee paced Davies with 17 points followed by Merick Sy and James See with 13 points each and Michael Mendoza with 11.

Sharing the limelight were Steel Asia, which edged Ironcon Builders, 77-76; Teckwerk, which humbled Phases Electrical Contractor, 76-52, and Welcoat Paints, which routed PCFBL Selection, 112-82.

Vita stays champion

VETERAN Johnson Vita pulled through in the pressure-packed ninth rack for a 5-4 escape over Cotabato-native Boy Ducanes to remain champion in the "Search for Tanduay the No. 1 Billiards Player" at the Robinson's Malls.

Meanwhile, participants of the 9-Ball Billiards Open Championship have until 6 p.m. today to register.

Participants can call up Rommel's Billiards c/o Rose or Luz at 712-3662 and 712-8931 or with the Corporate Billiards League secretariat at 0918-9219934.

Laguna vs NCR

LAGUNA ousted defending champion Negros Occidental, 1-0, from the finals of the "2004 SuperFerry National Championship" Thursday at the Ateneo pitch.

NCR/Philippine Air Force also booked a finals berth with a 5-4 shootout win over Cebu. Regulation play ended in a 2-2 draw with NCR goals by Raymond Tonog (36) and Ian Araneta (46) and Cebu strikes by Robert Nikart (32) and Limar Baunsit (55).

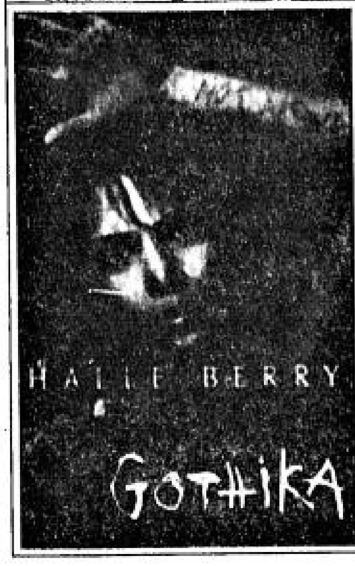
The final is booked at 3 p.m. at the UST pitch in España.

Athletes honored

DE LA SALLE Zobel held its annual Athletes Night yesterday at the DLSZ gym.

Organized by the DLSZ Parents Association Sports Development Foundation, the event was in recognition of the athlete-student's hard work, dedication and commitment during practices and tournaments throughout the year.

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 Strictly for 13 years of age and up


HALLE BERRY
GOTHIKA

Ghost story is "scary as hell"

Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'

"Because she is dead doesn't mean she's gone...".

Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. *GOTHIKA* also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.

Bring the barkada & scream all you can! NOW SHOWING

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-18 Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted

OPENS MARCH 10

A film that will make you laugh.
A film that will make you cry.
A film that will remind you that "LOVE IS ALL AROUND."

Somewhere in this movie, you'll find the love of your life.

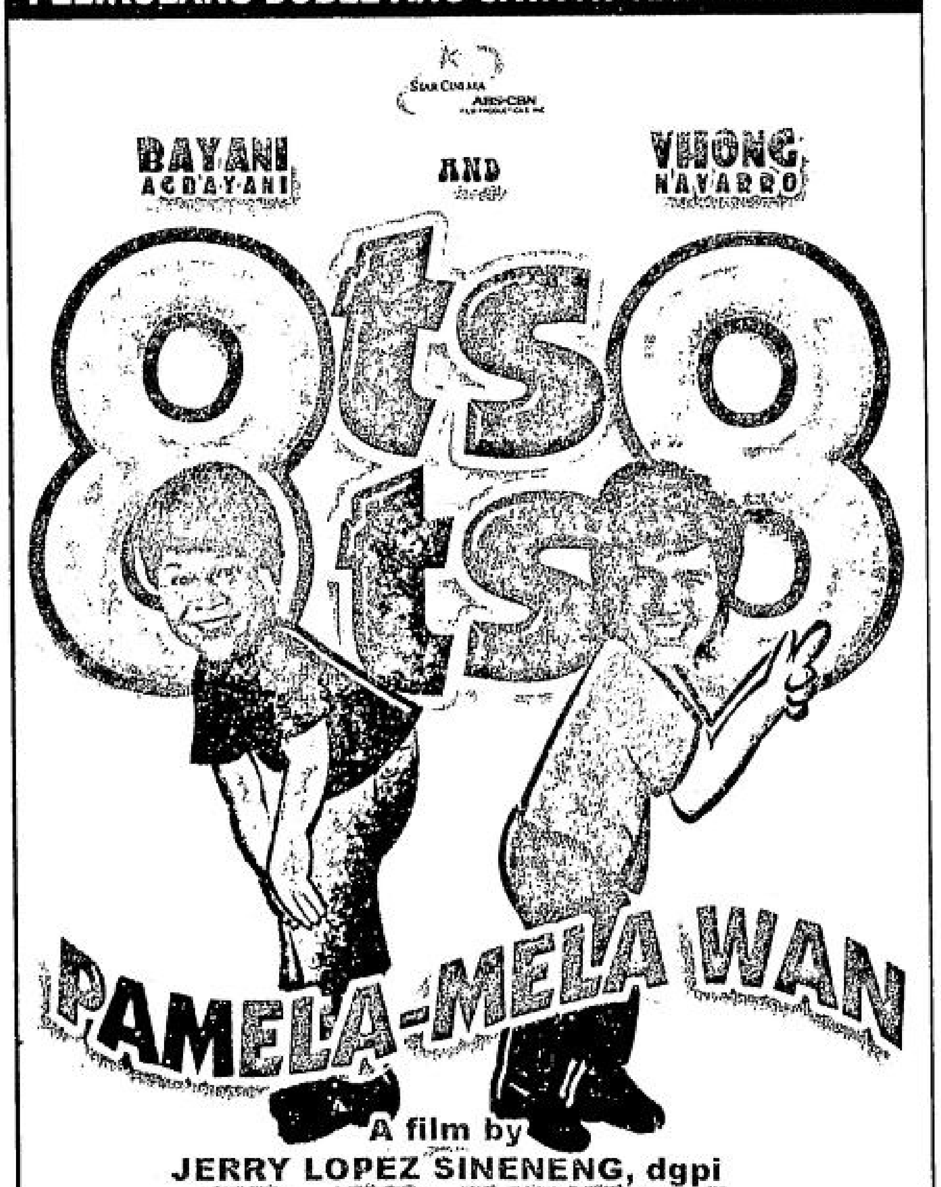
From The Makers of Notting Hill

THE ULTIMATE ROMANTIC COMEDY

loveactually

Very romantic. Very comedy.

MAKISAYAW, MAKIGALAW AT MAKIGILING SA PELIKULANG DOBLE ANG SAYA AT KATATAWANAN!

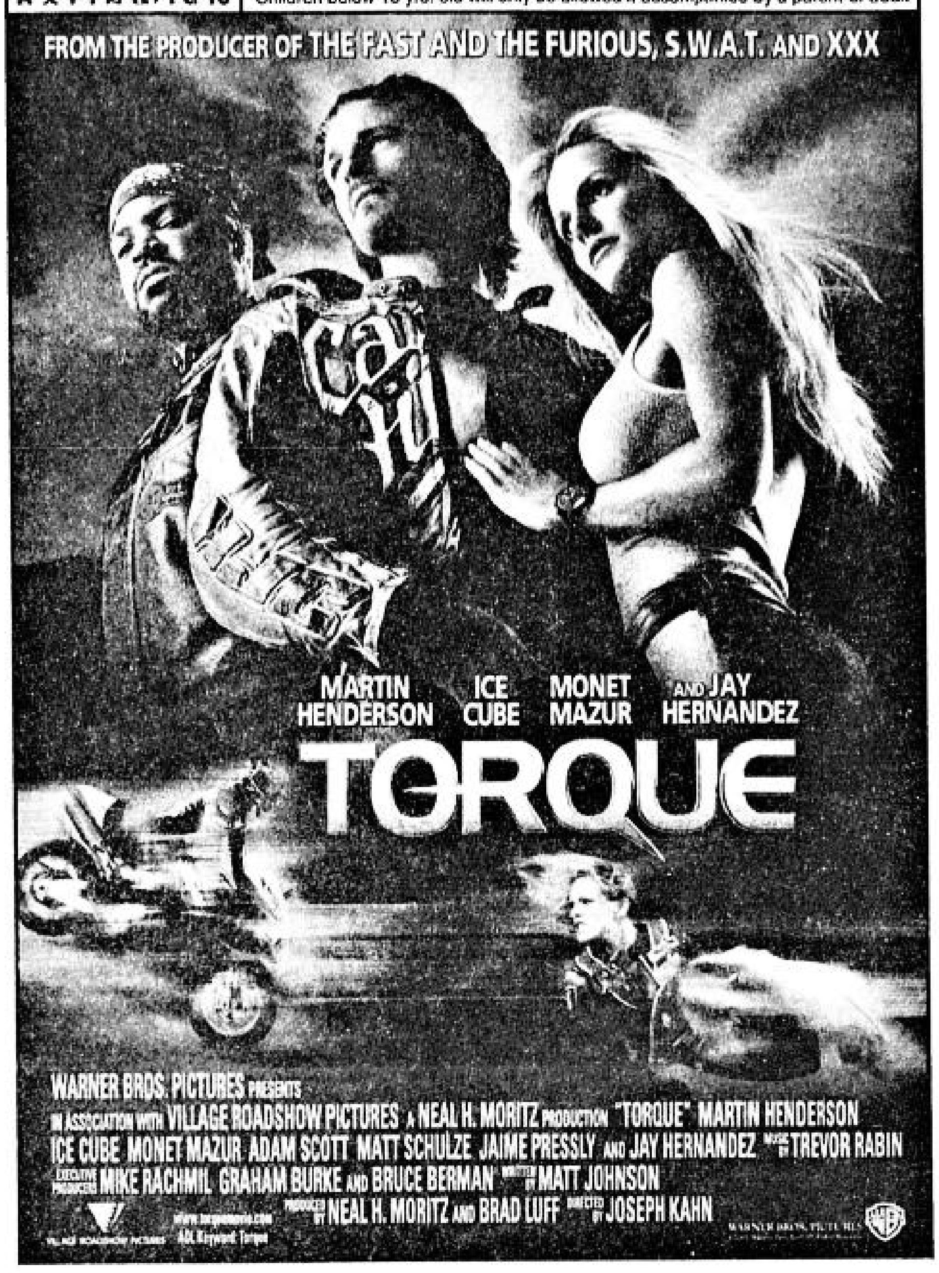

Star Cinema
ABS-CBN
BAYANI AGBAYANI
AND
VHONG NAVARRO
otso otso
PAMELA-MELA WAN

A film by
JERRY LOPEZ SINENENG, dgpi

OPENS ON MARCH 17, 2004

NOW SHOWING

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult


FROM THE PRODUCER OF THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS, S.W.A.T. AND XXX
MARTIN HENDERSON
ICE CUBE
MONET MAZUR
AND JAY HERNANDEZ
TORQUE
WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH VILLAGE ROADSHOW PICTURES A NEAL H. MORITZ PRODUCTION "TORQUE" MARTIN HENDERSON ICE CUBE MONET MAZUR ADAM SCOTT MATT SCHULZE JAIME PRESSLY AND JAY HERNANDEZ MUSIC BY TREVOR RABIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MIKE RACHMIL GRAHAM BURKE AND BRUCE BERMAN WRITTEN BY MATT JOHNSON PRODUCED BY NEAL H. MORITZ AND BRAD LUFF DIRECTED BY JOSEPH KAHN
AOL Keyword: Torque

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
3RD TERRIFYING HIT WEEK!
SAGAD SA BUTO... MABABALATAN KA SA TAKOT!
THE BONE SNATCHER

the Spiral
MTRCB RATING R-13
NOW SHOWING
EXCLUSIVELY AT SM MANILA & MEGAM
"RING" TERRIFIED AUDIENCES IN JAPAN, HONG KONG, TAIWAN, SOUTH KOREA, U.K., SPAIN AND FRANCE!
NOW "THE SPIRAL" BRINGS THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE, AS THE CURSE OF THE VIDEO THAT KILLS GROWS WIDER.
the Spiral
JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SA TO PUT ON A VIDEO AGAIN...

AYALA MALLS
Beauty and the Beast

AYALA CENTER
Feb. 20 - 5pm. 7pm
Feb. 21 - 11am, 3pm, 5pm. 7pm
Feb. 22 - 11am, 3pm, 5pm

ALABANG TOWN
Feb. 27 - 11am, 3pm, 6pm
Feb. 28 11am, 3pm, 6pm
Feb. 29 - 11am, 3pm. 6pm

AYALA CENTER CEBU
Mar. 5 - 4pm, 7:30pm
Mar. 6 - 11am, 3pm, 5pm. 7pm
Mar. 7 - 11:30am, 3pm, 6:30pm

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ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD MOVIE PASS
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Get Special discounts for volume purchases!

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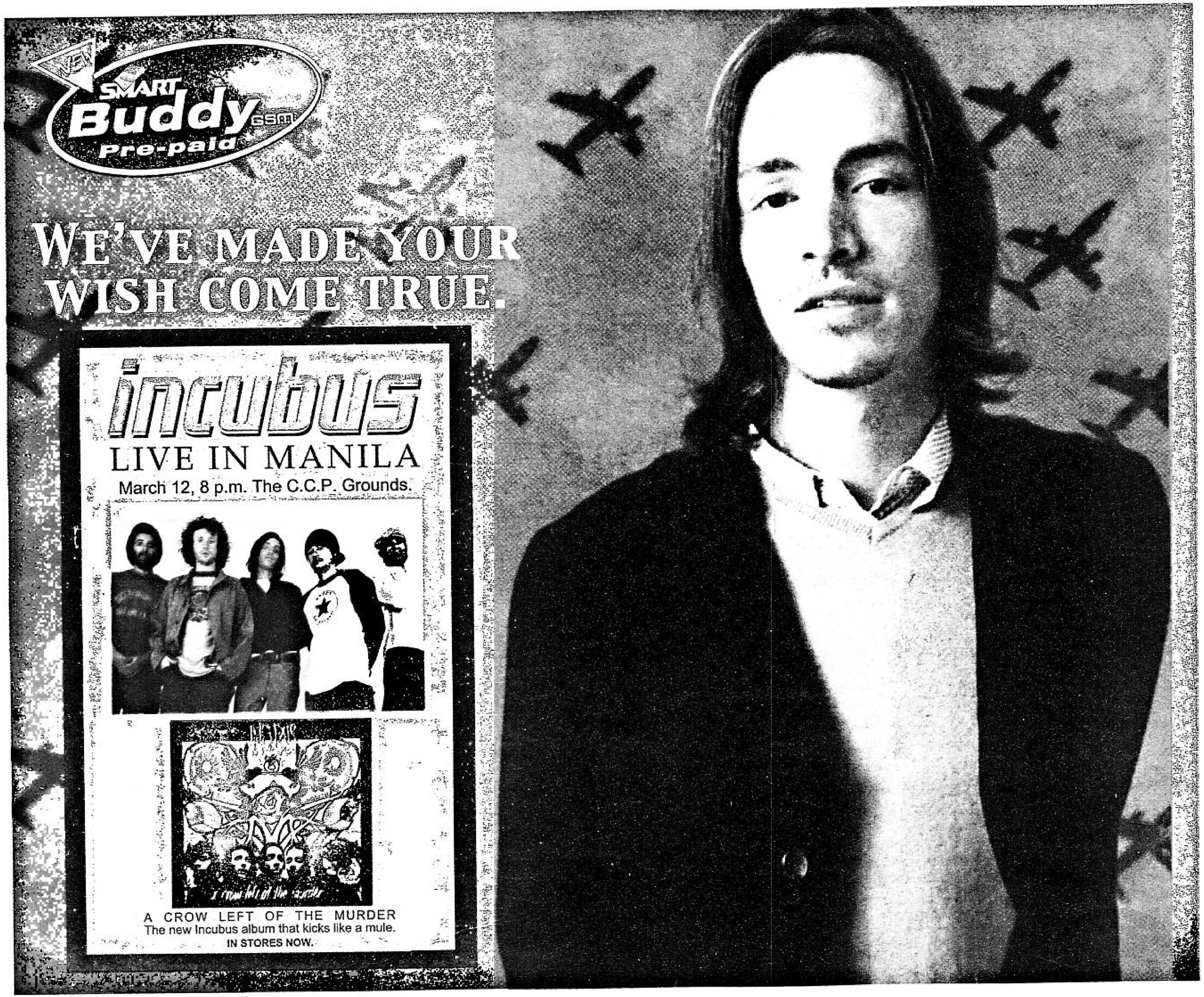
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incubus
LIVE IN MANILA
March 12, 8 p.m. The C.C.P. Grounds.

A CROW LEFT OF THE MURDER
The new Incubus album that kicks like a mule.
IN STORES NOW.

Here's your chance to score free concert tickets and even meet and greet Incubus !

Plus lots of freebies like bags or caps are up for grabs. Simply buy a SMART Buddy 64K Super SIM 2 at selected Jag outlets or SMART Wireless Centers. Then download an Incubus logo, ringtone or wallpaper and present it to the SMART attendant.

64K supersim

Participating Jag stores : Glorietta, Robinson's Place Manila & Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall. Participating SMART Wireless Centers: SMART Tower, Greenbelt 1, Robinson's Place Manila & Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall.

Promo is from February 28 to March 9, 2004. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0874, Series of 2004

Join the Incubus Download Promo and be one of the lucky SMART subscribers to win these awesome prizes:

- **One of over 500 concert tickets**
- **One of 10 Meet and Greet passes**
- **An autographed copy of Brandon Boyd's "White Fluffy Clouds."**
- **P25,000 cash.**

Simply download Incubus tones or graphics from SMART Buddy Music.
For a list of downloads, text INCUBUS to 209.

Promo is from February 15 to March 28, 2004. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0423, Series of 2004

Tones

1	Megalomaniac	**INC1**	7	Are You In	**INC7**
2	Nice To Know You	**INC2**	8	Warning	**INC8**
3	Wish You Were Here	**INC3**	9	I Miss You	**INC9**
4	Pardon Me	**INC4**	10	A Crow Left Of The Murder	**INC10**
5	Drive	**INC5**	11	Agoraphobia	**INC11**
6	Stellar	**INC6**	12	Talk Shows On Mute	**INC12**

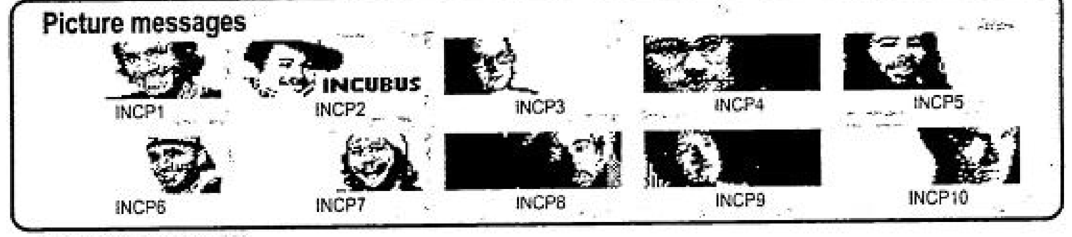
For ringtones, type TONE <keyword> and send to 209 For polytones, type POLY <keyword> and send to 209

Logos

INCUBUS	INCL1
INCUBUS	INCL2
INCUBUS	INCL3
INCUBUS	INCL4
INCUBUS	INCL5
BRANDON	INCL6
Mike	INCL7
Jose	INCL8
Ben	INCL9
[illegible]	INCL10

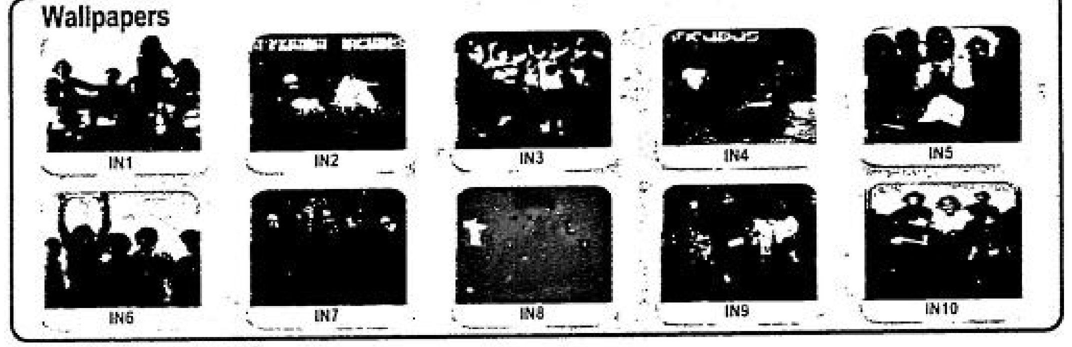
Text LOGO <keyword> to 209

Picture messages



Text PIC <keyword> to 209

Wallpapers



Text MMS <keyword> to 209

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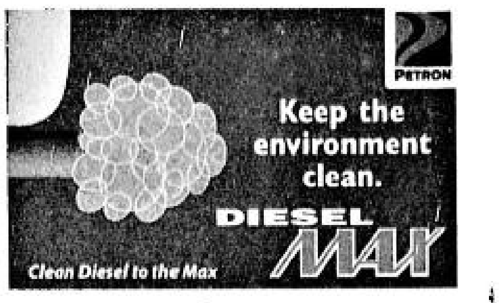
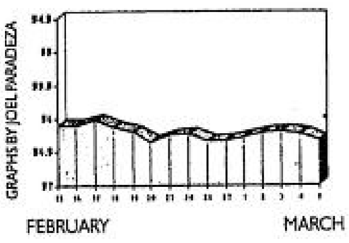


February inflation eases to 4%

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 56.345 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 5, 2004

¥ 111.18 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 5, 2004

GOLD: $392.50-393.00

per ounce Hong Kong, March 5, 2004

March 5, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.819941	1.000000	56.2100
Japan	Yen	0.007384	0.009006	0.5062
United Kingdom	Pound	1.495162	1.823500	102.4989
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105215	0.128320	7.2129
Switzerland	Franc	0.634187	0.773455	43.4759
Canada	Dollar	0.615202	0.750300	42.1744
Singapore	Dollar	0.478044	0.583022	32.7717
Australia	Dollar	0.617100	0.752615	42.3045
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.175025	2.652661	149.1061
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.218651	0.266667	14.9894
Brunei	Dollar	0.476655	0.581328	32.6764
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000096	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020758	0.025316	1.4230
UAE	Dirham	0.223235	0.272257	15.3036
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.219600	68.5537
Argentina	Peso	0.281525	0.343348	19.2996
Brazil	Real	0.283913	0.346260	19.4633
Denmark	Kroner	0.134199	0.163669	9.1998
India	Rupee	0.018112	0.022090	1.2417
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.215803	0.263193	14.7941
Mexico	New Peso	0.074880	0.091324	5.1333
New Zealand	Dollar	0.548859	0.669389	37.6264
Norway	Kroner	0.115501	0.140865	7.9180
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014337	0.017486	0.9829
South Africa	Rand	0.120622	0.147111	8.2691
Korea	Won	0.000701	0.000855	0.0481
Sweden	Kroner	0.108567	0.132408	7.4427
Syria	Pound	0.015896	0.019387	1.0897
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.024682	0.030102	1.6920
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000428	0.000522	0.0293

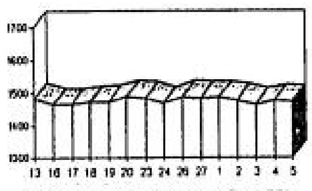
Stocks end down

STOCKS ended a touch lower yesterday on uncertainty over who will win the presidential elections in May, with falls in property developers taking the shine off gains in telecoms shares.

Philippine Long Distance Tele-

STOCKS/ B2

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

By Michelle V. Remo and Doris C. Dumlao

THE INCREASE in consumer prices was relatively stable in February due to a slowdown in the price movement of some food items, but higher transport fares coupled with the weakening of the peso are seen to put pressure on inflation this month.

The National Statistics Office reported yesterday that using the year 2000 as base, inflation for February slightly eased to 4 percent from 4.1 percent last month. Using the 1994-based consumer price index, inflation was kept at the previous month's level of 3.4 percent.

The inflation for February was still at a safe level because it was well within the government's target for the year of 4 to 5 percent, according to Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, who is also director general of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Neri, however, warned that higher transport fares in the provinces and a decline in the peso's exchange rate brought by volatility in the run-up to the May elections might push up inflation in the coming months.

He added that the effects of the recent increase in tariffs on selected imports might soon be felt, as companies begin passing on to consumers the burden of the higher taxes.

Malacañang earlier issued EO 264, which implemented the increase in tariffs on certain products to ease stiff competition felt by local industries against imports.

Luz Lorenzo, economist at ATR Kim Eng Securities, said that while inflation was stable in February, consumers could not expect prices to remain at last month's levels should the peso decline further.

"Inflation in the coming months will be highly dependent on the performance of the peso," she said.

In response to projections of a significant increase in prices in the coming months because of the perceived uncertainty on the political front, Neri said the inter-agency Development Budget Coordinating Committee would come up with measures to ensure that the 2004 inflation ceiling would not be breached.

The NSO reported that inflation rate for food was recorded at 3.4 percent last month, or the same as in January.

The favorable inflation inflation report for February has eased pressures on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to keep a tighter lid on liquidity.

The 3.4-percent annual inflation rate (using the old base) was exactly at the lower end of the BSP's 3.4-3.6 percent projection of annual inflation for the month of February.

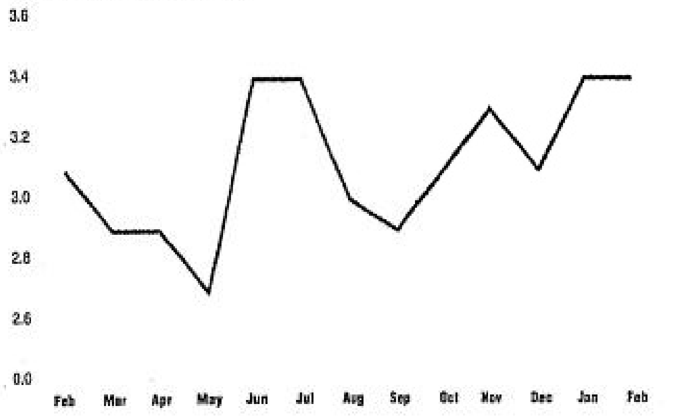
"The inflation number gives us some flexibility but we remain cautious because of looming inflationary pressures from oil, transport, wages and others," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said yesterday.

The next interest rate policy

FEBRUARY/ B2

INFLATION RATES

Feb. 2003 to Feb. 2004, base year=1994



Exports from Subic freeport up 22% in January

By Ronnel W. Domingo

EXPORTS from the Subic Bay Freeport in January went up by about 22 percent to $76.4 million from $62.9 million in the same month in 2002.

At the same time, the Bureau of Customs' cash collection in the freeport for January went up by 5 percent to P250 million from P239 million in the same period last year.

According to the One-Stop-Export Documentation Center-Subic, Taiwanese firm Winstron Infocomm, a subsidiary of Acer Computers, accounted for 73 percent of January exports with $55.8 million worth of shipments.

Electric machineries and appliance maker Sanyo Denki exported the second-largest amount with $4.5 million while automated teller machine maker Omron Corp. followed with $4.2 million.

Junken Sangyo (Philippines), a Japanese wood processor, posted $2.2 million in export value in January.

Other industries that contributed to Subic's exports were high-end garment manufacturing, jewelry design, and aircraft parts production.

These firms included Subic Bay Apparel Corp., DJ Aerospace, Illios Jewelers of Italy, Galante, Aurum Alliance Corp., Bay Lux International Inc., Filcam Industries Inc. and Riflessi D' Oro Corp.

"We are optimistic that in the next few months, these figures will still (go) up due to the continuous rebound in the export of electronic products," OSEDC-Subic manager Noel Tuliao said.

Also, Customs district collector Arnel Alcaraz reported that the increased cash collection came from domestic and foreign ship calls and transshipment operations.

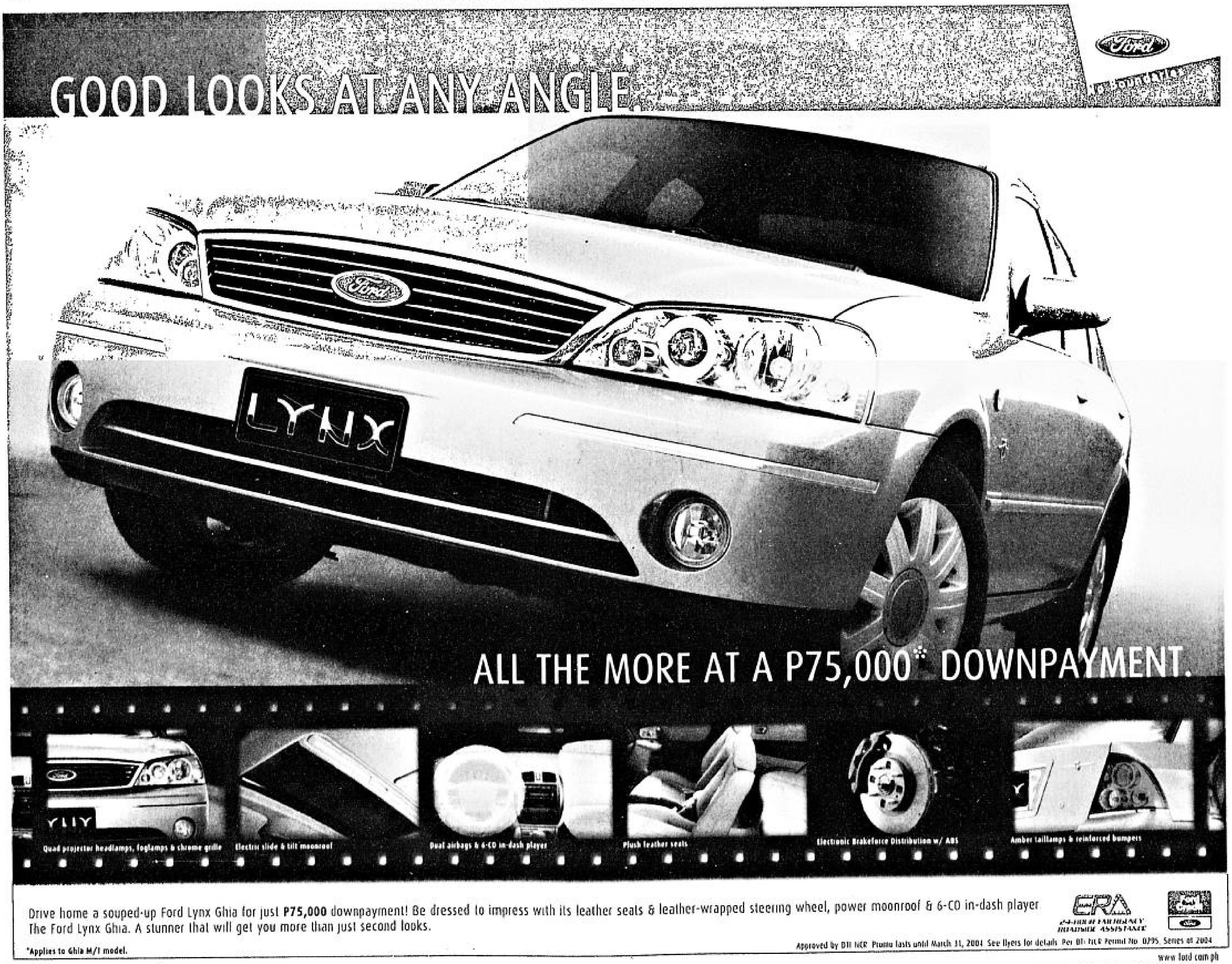
Revenues were also earned from the taxes and duties that freeport locators paid for the importation of heavy equipment and motor vehicles.

On Thursday, the national government reported that total exports for January went up by 4.1 percent to $2.8 billion from the year-ago figure of $2.7 billion.

In a statement, Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said: "The gains in exports for January resulted from increased exports to our Asian markets under efforts to diversify and expand the country's export base."

Purisima also noted that Japan overtook the United States as the country's top market in January.

Japan accounted for 17.5 percent of January exports while the United States accounted for 17 percent.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Smart to seek NTC approval on deferment of stock offering

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc. said it would soon ask the National Telecommunications Commission to allow it to defer indefinitely the timetable of its initial public offering (IPO) from the August 2004 deadline set by its congressional mandate.

"We will soon seek a deferral from the NTC of our IPO but we have not put this in writing," Smart president and chief executive officer Napoleon Nazareno told reporters.

Smart is wholly owned by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. PLDT's wireless subsidiary had been the parent firm's cash cow since the mobile phone business became profitable in the last two years.

PLDT's plan for Smart and its losing subsidiary Pilipino Telephone Corp. had been the subject of much speculation. Rumors of a merger between Smart and Piltel so Smart could do a backdoor listing persisted in the market.

The listing of Smart, being one of the most profitable local firms, is being counted on to revive a sluggish equities market.

NTC Chair Ronald Solis said the commission has started to study the delay in the public listing of Smart.

"But we would only meet on the issue once Smart has submitted its request for a deferral. For the meantime, we have asked our legal department to study as to whether the deferral has basis, if it has a precedent," Solis said.

Last month, Smart chair Manuel Pangilinan said the most ideal timetable for an IPO would be in 2007 once PLDT had substantially reduced its debt and the fixed-line business could stand on its own.

Smart would invoke poor market conditions to justify a need to push back its IPO. The same argument was used by oil refiners in the past to avoid going public as required by the oil deregulation law.

"It is difficult to plan given the political situation because of uncertainties. We would rather wait until the situation clarifies itself. We are not in a hurry, we have to be flexible," Pangilinan said earlier.

"Undertaking an IPO during these uncertain times is not conducive to shareholder value," he added.

Pangilinan said Smart would pursue an IPO once PLDT has substantially reduced its debt and the fixed-line business "could stand on its own."

PLDT's total debt stood at $2.9 billion as of end-2003 and the company said it would chop another $350-$370 million off its liabilities this year.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Labor and Employment
NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION
Quezon City

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2-01

(Series of 2004)

FOR : **All Presiding/Commissioners Executive/Labor Arbiters**
SUBJECT : **Strict Application of the Requirements for Appearance of Lawyers or Non-Lawyers**
DATE : **February 6, 2004**

Article 222 of the Labor Code, as amended, provides that non-lawyers may appear before the Commission or any Labor Arbiter only if they represent themselves or if they represent their organization or members thereof. Section 8, Rule III of the Rules of Procedure of the National Labor Relations Commission defines the requirements on appearances of lawyers and limits the appearance of non-lawyers only to the following: a) if he represents himself as party to the case, b) if he represents a legitimate labor organization, as defined under Article 222 and 242 of the Labor Code, as amended, or its members, provided, that he shall be made to present a verified certification from said organization that he is properly authorized; or, c) if he is duly accredited member of any legal aid office duly recognized by the Department of Justice or Integrated Bar of the Philippines. The NLRC Rules also stress that lawyers or non-lawyers appearing for any of the parties have the authority to bind their clients in all matters of procedure. Besides, as a general rule, a client is bound by the mistake or negligence of his lawyer or non-lawyer representative.

The aforecited provisions of the law and rules, notwithstanding, concerns on non-lawyers falsely pretending to possess power, influence or qualification or employing other forms of similar deceits in order to persuade any of the parties to retain them as their representative before the Commission or Labor Arbiter to unjustly enrich themselves and to further nefarious activities have been brought to our attention. These problems cause confusion and complaints on violation of due process being raised which result in delay in the proceedings. These likewise create an atmosphere conducive to the proliferation of fixers and/or ambulance chasers.

In order therefore, to address the foregoing concerns, ensure the orderly dispensation of labor justice and protect the interest of parties being represented, the following clarifications of the requirements on appearances of lawyers or non-lawyers are hereby issued for strict compliance of all concerned:

1. A LAWYER APPEARING FOR A PARTY SHALL BE REQUIRED TO INDICATE IN HIS PLEADING HIS ATTORNEYS ROLL NUMBER, AS WELL AS HIS PTR AND IBP NUMBERS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR.
2. A NON-LAWYER MAY APPEAR BEFORE THE COMMISSION OR THE LABOR ARBITER, ONLY IF:
   2.1 HE IS A PARTY TO THE CASE AND HE REPRESENTS HIMSELF;
   2.2 HE REPRESENTS A LEGITIMATE LABOR ORGANIZATION WHICH IS A PARTY TO THE CASE; PROVIDED THAT HE SHALL BE MADE TO PRESENT THE FOLLOWING:
      A. A CERTIFICATION FROM THE BUREAU OF LABOR RELATIONS (BLR) OR THE REGIONAL OFFICE, DOLE, THAT THE LABOR ORGANIZATION HE REPRESENTS IS DULY REGISTERED AND LISTED IN THE ROSTER OF LEGITIMATE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, AND
      B. A VERIFIED CERTIFICATION ISSUED BY THE UNION SECRETARY AND ATTESTED TO BY.THE UNION PRESIDENT STATING THAT HE IS PROPERLY AUTHORIZED THROUGH A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, A COPY OF WHICH IS ATTACHED.
   2.3 HE REPRESENTS A MEMBERS OF A LEGITIMATE LABOR ORGANIZATION EXISTING WITHIN THE RESPONDENT ESTABLISHMENT/COMPANY/CORPORATION; PROVIDED THAT HE SHALL BE MADE TO PRESENT A VERIFIED CERTIFICATION THAT HE IS PROPERLY AUTHORIZED AND A CERTIFICATION ISSUED BY THE UNION SECRETARY ATTESTED BY THE UNION PRESIDENT STATING THAT COMPLAINANT IS A MEMBER OF THEIR UNION WHICH IS EXISTING IN THE ESTABLISHMENT/COMPANY/CORPORATION.
   2.4 HE IS A DULY ACCREDITED MEMBER OF ANY LEGAL AID OFFICE DULY RECOGNIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OR INTEGRATED BAR OF THE PHILIPPINES; PROVIDED THAT HE SHALL BE MADE TO PRESENT PROOF OF HIS ACCREDITATION;
   2.5 HE IS THE PRESIDENT OR OWNER OF RESPONDENT ESTABLISHMENT, COMPANY OR CORPORATION OR HE IS AN INCUMBENT RESPONSIBLE OFFICER THEREOF; PROVIDED THAT HE SHALL BE MADE TO PRESENT A VERIFIED CERTIFICATION THAT HE IS PROPERLY AUTHORIZED THROUGH A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SAID ENTITY AND TO ATTACH A COPY OF SAID RESOLUTION;
3. A NON-LAWYER SHALL NOT BE RECOGNIZED IF HE APPEARS IN REPRESENTATION OF ANY LAWYER OR ANY LAW FIRM IN ANY OF THE PROCEEDING BEFORE THE COMMISSION OR LABOR ARBITER.
4. THE APPEARANCE OF A NON-LAWYER HAS BEEN ALLOWED BY ARTICLE 222 OF THE LABOR CODE, AS AMENDED, UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY, HENCE, THIS CANNOT BE SUPPLANTED BY AN AGREEMENT, NON-OBJECTION, WAIVER OR SPECIAL POWER OF ATTORNEY EXECUTED BY A PARTY TO THE CASE IN FAVOR OF A NON-LAWYER. ACCORDINGLY, A NON-LAWYER SHALL NOT BE RECOGNIZED EVEN IF THE OPPOSING PARTY DOES NOT OBJECT TO HIS APPEARANCE OR IF HE PRESENTS AN AGREEMENT, WAIVER, OR SPECIAL POWER OF ATTORNEY.
5. LAWYERS OR NON-LAWYERS CANNOT ENTER INTO A COMPROMISE AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSING PARTY IN FULL OR PARTIAL DISCHARGE OF A CLIENT'S CLAIM WITHOUT FIRST SUBMITTING A SPECIAL POWER OF ATTORNEY IN HIS FAVOR DULY EXECUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW BY A PARTY TO THE CASE.
6. APPEARANCES MAY BE MADE ORALLY OR IN WRITING. IN BOTH CASES THE COMPLETE NAME AND OFFICE ADDRESS OF BOTH PARTIES SHALL BE MADE ON RECORD AND THE ADVERSE PARTY OR HIS LAWYER OR NON-LAWYER REPRESENTATIVE PROPERLY NOTIFIED;
7. ANY CHANGE IN ADDRESS OF THE LAWYER OR NON-LAWYER REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD BE FILED WITH THE RECORDS OF THE CASE AND FURNISHED THE ADVERSE PARTY OF COUNSEL;
8. ANY CHANGE OR WITHDRAWAL OF COUNSEL OR NON-LAWYER REPRESENTATIVE SHALL BE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 26, RULE 138 OF THE RULES OF COURT.

Any lawyer or non-lawyer who does not comply with the requirements on appearances as laid down in Article 222 of the Labor Code, as amended, and Section 8, Rule III of the Rules of Procedure of the NLRC, as amended, and as further clarified by this circular, shall not be recognized. This is without prejudice to any action (civil or criminal) that the offended party may deem proper to bring against the offender. Any employee or officer of this Commission who may have abetted the non-compliance shall be administratively charged under the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA No. 3019) and/or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (RA No. 6713).

FOR STRICT COMPLIANCE.

Quezon City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) ROY V. SEÑERES
Chairman

(PDI - March 6, 2004)

Meralco creditors roll over $79.2-M loans

By Abigail L. Ho

LOPEZ-LED Manila Electric Co. got another three-month reprieve from payment of short-term debts worth $79.2 million (around P4.4 billion) as its creditors agreed to roll over the loans until June.

Meralco vice president and assistant corporate secretary Gil San Diego said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday that the company's lenders agreed to roll over the amount on the same terms and conditions.

This is the fourth rollover of the loans since the first three extensions granted in April and July last year and another one just this January.

"The company's short-term lenders continue to be supportive of Meralco's refinancing plans," San Diego said.

In the meantime, he said the distribution utility would just continue reviewing its options on how to address its near-term obligations with longer-term solutions.

However, he declined to name what options were currently being discussed, saying that proper disclosures would be made once these options were already being implemented.

As of November last year, Meralco's outstanding debt amounted to P106.4 billion.

Meralco last Thursday made a partial payment of P8.8 million to creditors BPI Capital, Citibank, Equitable-PCIBank and Banco de Oro, sealing their agreement to roll over the loans by another three months, Meralco president Jesus Francisco said in a telephone interview yesterday.

As far as terming out the loans were concerned, he said this was still on hold as the refinancing required to see this through had been shelved.

Francisco said the refinancing had been put on hold because of two factors: the Supreme Court's temporary restraining order on Meralco's provisional rate increase of 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) and the coming May polls.

The Energy Regulatory Commission approved on Nov. 27, 2003, a 12-centavo-per-kWh provisional rate increase that Meralco could collect from four million households starting Jan. 1.

However, the Supreme Court on Jan. 17 issued a TRO on the ERC-approved order, while determining whether or not the regulatory body had the power to grant power utilities the provisional authority for rate adjustments.

GMA-7 aims to wipe out debt by 2005

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TELEVISION company GMA Network Inc. is aiming to wipe out its debts by the first half of 2005 after it settles a maturing P500-million debt due this year.

Ronaldo P. Mastrili, GMA vice president for finance, said the company's total outstanding debt stood at P1 billion. Half of this will mature this year and will be financed internally from operations. The other P500 million will fall due in 2005 and will also be paid in cash from operations.

Once it eliminates its debt by 2005, the company can raise additional capital from an initial public offering or through possible borrowings.

The company said it was ready to offer its shares to the public but was waiting for stock market conditions to improve, GMA shareholders said earlier.

"We are ready, it could be at the earliest in 2004," Felipe L. Gozon, GMA chair and president, said.

Gozon added that they have not received any new offer from the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) group on a buy-in.

"I think he (PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan) is interested. However, he has not made any offer to us the majority," Gozon said.

The network is controlled by three families—the Duavit and Jimenez families that hold 35 percent each and the Gozon family, which owns 30 percent.

In 2001, PLDT offered to buy 65 percent of the company. GMA then was valued at P15.8 billion, Gozon said.

However, the deal was aborted since PLDT focused first on settling its huge debt.

Gozon said that should a public offering push through, the Gozon and Duavit families would not give up control of the company.

The company also plans to double its existing authorized capital of P1 billion in preparation for the planned public offering, which may consist of new and secondary shares.

GMA also said that total revenues grew by 48 percent to P6.2 billion last year, boosted by the company's improved ratings and new programs.

February inflation . . .

From page B1

setting of the Monetary Board, the BSP's policy-making body, is set on March 11.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. declined to say whether there would be any change in the institution's overnight rates during the next meeting. "It will still be up for discussion."

The BSP's overnight borrowing and lending rates currently stand at 6.75 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Analysts said the February inflation report was "benign" and was not likely to result in any monetary policy change.

"Prices are no longer reacting that much despite threats of higher oil prices and exchange rate volatility, so I don't think there will be policy changes," said Banco de Oro Universal Bank market strategist Jonathan Ravelas.

Ravelas noted that the exchange rate, after the Supreme Court ruling which allowed actor Fernando Poe Jr. to run, had taken a breather and was thus more likely to consolidate now.

As such, Ravelas said inflation rate in the country would likely move sideways for the remainder of the year.

"We are looking at 4 percent (average inflation rate) for the year so it's within the government's target," Ravelas said. "It's well-contained."

Ravelas said the market had likewise started to cope with the shift by consumers to pork and beef in lieu of chicken following the outbreak of the bird flu virus in other neighboring countries.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 5, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	31,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46	45.5	45.5	262,800
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,600
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38	38	11,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.58	400,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25.5	25.5	25	25	365,300
Philippine National Bank	23.25	23.5	23.25	23.25	2,500
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	10,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	2,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	20,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	150	150	150	150	10
Manulife Financial Corp.	2010	2010	2005	2005	620
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	50,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	155	155	155	155	51,170
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1505	1505	1505	1505	420
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.75	22.75	22.75	22.75	2,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	970,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	860	865	38,840
Ipeople Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.036	0.036	0.036	0.036	1,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	30,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.68	1.7	33,181,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	945	955	945	950	128,990
Ivantage Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	10,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,800,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20	20	19.75	19.75	136,500
Manila Electric Co. B	32.5	33	32.5	32.5	238,200
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	404,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	31,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	10,000
William,Gothong & Aboitiz	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	600,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.4	1.4	320,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	50,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.25	18.5	261,200
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56	57	110,900
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	70	69.5	70	65,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.5	380,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	6,150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	40,000
Ayala Corp.	6	6	6	6	4,071,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3	3	25,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.96	1	0.96	1	1,770,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	60,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.64	1.64	1.6	1.6	40,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	8,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.59	1,110,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.24	650,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	24	24	23.75	23.75	30,000
House Of Investments Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	100,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	5,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.45	0.48	0.45	0.48	40,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.08	452,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	2,220,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	600,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	15,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	7,900,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	30,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23	23	23	23	167,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series N	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5,723,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	260,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.17	0.175	0.16	0.165	3,950,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.205	0.205	810,000
Filinvest Land Inc	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.06	629,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	540,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	920,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	7,189,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	50,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.205	0.205	310,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	2,260,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	1,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	3,490,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	600,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	7,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	20,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	20,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	50,000

DISCLOSURES

BALABAC Resources & Holdings Co. Inc. disclosed that the company is unaware of any information that may have affected the value and trading of its shares on March 4.

* * *

ISM Communications Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27. Record date is on April 9. Its board of directors also accepted the resignation of Roberto O. Valdes as director and elected Atty. Severino P. Sumulong to replace him on the board.

* * *

MACROASIA Corp. informed that Amador T. Sendin was elected as new member of the board of directors for Cebu Pacific Catering Services to replace Daniel Roman S. Pido.

* * *

MANILA Electric Co. disclosed that its short-term lenders have agreed to roll-over the short-term loans amounting to $79.2 million (P4.4 billion) until June 2004 on the same terms and conditions.

* * *

A.SORIANO Corp.'s 100,000 shares were bought by its wholly owned subsidiary, Anscor Consolidated Corp.

* * *

ASIAN Terminals Inc. signed an agreement for a five-year fixed and floating rate peso-denominated loan in the amount of P500 million with Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corp. Ltd.

* * *

SAN MIGUEL Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 20 at 2 p.m. at the Ballroom, Valle Verde Country Club Inc., Pasig City. Record date is on February 17. ***Compiled by Ray Leyesa, PDI Research***

Stocks end down

From page B1

phone Co. (PLDT), the nation's largest phone firm, added P5 at P950 on news that its parent firm, Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., was seeking exploratory talks with foreign telecoms players for possible joint ventures.

PLDT owns the country's largest mobile phone firm, Smart Communications Inc.

The main index dropped 2.42 points or 0.16 percent to 1,471.65, trimming its gains for the year to 2 percent.

Market turnover was P400.27 million as losers beat gainers 30 to 13, with 43 stocks unchanged.

"There are no strong market leads. The news on a favorable court ruling for FPJ was good for one day only," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan.

The Supreme Court late on Wednesday dismissed a petition to disqualify movie star Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) and ruled he was a natural-born Filipino qualified to run for president.

"The bigger issue now is who will be the next president and what are the policies that they have to offer to investors," Vistan said.

SM Prime Holdings Inc, the country's largest mall developer, fell 1.64 percent or 10 centavos to P6. Ayala Land Inc., the country's largest property developer, dropped 1.79 percent or 10 centavos to P5.50. Third-ranked Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), 45-percent owned by PLDT, jumped 2.41 percent or four centavos to P1.70.

Piltel, which has soared 93 percent this year on speculation of a merger with Smart, recently reported a sharply narrower annual loss and hopes to return to profit this year for the first time since 1997.

Reuters

Dollar reserves fall 2% due to debt servicing

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves fell to $15.76 billion as of end-February from $16.08 billion in January on increased foreign exchange outflow due to public sector debt servicing.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, however, said yesterday that despite the decline, the GIR level was still adequate to cover 4.4 months worth of merchandise imports.

Although the BSP has conserved its reserves by staying away from intervening in the spot foreign exchange market despite recent volatility, outflows were inevitable due to debt servicing.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the 2-percent decline in the GIR level was due mainly to the debt servicing requirements of the national government and the BSP itself.

"This was partly offset, however, by the deposit of the NG with the BSP of its net loan proceeds from the RP global bond exchange," Buenaventura said.

The government recently swapped $1.3 billion worth of debts with bonds carrying longer maturity.

The BSP chief said the country's reserves were still sufficient to cover maturing debts.

"Alternatively, this was equivalent to 2.7 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.4 times based on residual maturity," he said.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding short-term external debt on original maturity plus principal payments on medium and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

At the same time, the BSP's net international reserves, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities, decreased to $12.889 billion from $13.17 billion a month ago.

But while the country's GIR level is declining, foreign currencies deposited with the local banking system continued to reach historic highs.

Buenaventura said foreign currency deposit unit (FCDU) deposits now hit $13.69 billion, topping the previous high of $13.4 billion recorded only a week ago.

FCDUs, considered as the country's secondary layer of foreign exchange reserves, historically attract more deposits whenever the peso falls against the US dollar. People and enterprises with dollar revenues choose to park their funds in FCDUs—instead of converting into pesos right away.

The higher build-up of FCDU deposits, however, does not necessarily translate to increased FCDU lending. Borrowers themselves, heeding lessons from the Asian currency turmoil, are averse to dollar loans these days due to the huge foreign exchange risks.

The rapid build-up of FCDU deposits is happening in the midst of suspicions that the system may be subject to abuses by dollar-hoarders.

Bamboo boosts income of rural village

By Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

FEATURE

PILAR, Abra—Tobacco farming used to be the only source of income for residents of Barangay Bolbolo here, 65 km from the capital town of Bangued.

But since barangay captain Ventura Siquiang discovered that people who ordered bundles of *rono* (a species of bamboo) from them were selling these at a handicraft store in Bangued, life was never the same again in Bolbolo.

It was Siquiang who convinced his village mates to gather the "grass" that used to be ignored and burnt when clearing. Since then, almost every resident of Bolbolo started making money out of these reeds.

To their delight, *rono* has been discovered as the most saleable among bamboo species here.

Farmers go directly to Siquiang's house to earn extra money after attending to their tobacco farms. Even children help in *rono* gathering after school and on Saturdays.

Pioneer

"The people in our barangay would rather earn extra income aside from what they get out of farming tobacco," Suquiang's wife Gloria said. "The kids do not ask *baon* (school allowance) now and that is really a great help to their parents."

Unlike the other types of bamboo such as bolo, *ingriw* and *kawayang tinik*, *rono* does not have a hollow center. These are found growing wild in most parts of Abra and reach up to two to three meters high.

Rono is usually fashioned into vases, place mats, birdcages, compact disc racks, organizers and magazine racks.

Prospera Calixterio or Nana Piring, owner of the Calixterio's Handicraft, is the acknowledged pioneer in the bamboo craft business in Abra.

She started selling bamboo hats and fans in the family's store in the early 1970s and had engaged local weavers to execute the designs.

The company expanded when orders from outside the province started pouring in. One of the company's first major projects was the production of *salakot* (native woven hat) for the Boy Scouts of the Philippines in 1973.

Calixterio has been attending trade fairs outside Abra since the '70s and has seen different designs made of other materials like cogon grass.

Innovative weavers

She would take some samples of new products and show these to her weavers. She said the weavers would then come up with a "bamboo version" of the product.

"Sometimes, they (bamboo craftsmen) would come up with ideas. When they saw some attache cases about 20 years ago, they started wondering if they could make bags out of bamboo and so they tried putting two hats together until they came up with their own design. They have made other designs since then," she said.

Calixterio credited the weavers for coming up with new designs and innovations that made the local bamboo industry healthy.

She said the weavers used the least noticed bamboo species as an alternative raw material. That was when *rono* became marketable, she said.

Rising demand

She said 80 percent of the bamboo products produced in her shop were geared for export while 20 percent were for local distribution, specifically catering to *balikbayans*.

ARTHA KIRA PAREDES/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

ABRA counts on its weavers, mostly women, to keep the bamboo craft business going. Since the men go out to look for raw materials, women do the design and weaving.

In July last year, Calixterio said the Native Crafts and Industries based in Quezon City placed an order for 5 million pieces of square and rectangle perfume containers for Marks & Spencer.

Unable to cope with the demand, Calixterio said she commissioned the prisoners at the Abra provincial jail to help out. She also asked workers of the Balbin's Quality Furniture to help them produce the perfume containers. Despite all these, Calixterio said they only managed to finish two million pieces.

Calixterio said she also received an order for a million pieces of place mat from Marshalls and Marshalls.

Inspired by the idea that he could start anew by gathering *rono* for Calixterio's shop, Angel Barwela, one of the prisoners who worked for Calixterio, recently left prison without fear of being discriminated upon. He now supplies *rono* to Calixterio's shop.

Calixterio said bamboo crafts do not have regular buyers and were considered seasonal items.

When orders are given during the rainy season, drying becomes a problem. Calixterio said his shop preferred to accept orders during summer to prevent molds and discoloration of the products.

In Sitio Carkariskis in Barangay Benben, La Paz, there are 44 families (about 400 people) who depend primarily on *rono* for their livelihood. Every house is stocked with bundles of *rono* and every child, as young as 6, is involved in the scraping the bamboo's outer skin. Toddlers could already help out by drying the reeds.

They are fortunate that at least two persons in the sitio have mobile phones and they could keep in touch with dealers.

Through mobile phones, the residents could spare themselves the grueling travel and transportation expense of P60. The amount could even reach up to P100 when the Calaba River starts overflowing during the rainy season. Carkariskis is 11 km from Bangued.

When residents deliver *rono* to Bangued, they hire trucks for P500 to P700 each.

Cooperative

Their clients from Metro Manila send their payment through the personal account of an employee of the Department of Trade and Industry in Bangued.

Farming activities are limited to once a year because they do not have an irrigation system.

George Rustia, chair of an association of bamboo workers in Abra, said workers who were willing to work more than eight hours a day can earn P100 daily.

Residents of Carkariskis plan to put up a cooperative to organize those engaged in bamboo craft and their finances. Electricity is also expected soon.

Naty Balbin, owner of Balbin's Quality Furniture and a consistent exhibitor abroad, said the Philippines would find it hard to compete with China, Vietnam and India.

She said these countries have "very cheap" labor and their governments were supporting those engaged in bamboo craft when they participate in international competitions.

"Buyers outside the country prefer cheaper products, the only time we did very well in bamboo crafts exporting was during SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in China. We also earned in late 2001, after the Sept. 11 terror attack on the United States," she said.

Calixterio said bamboo crafts makers and exports needed good roads to transport their products and raw materials.

Support

"Certain areas with the best weavers could make more if there are all-weather roads and farm-to-market roads. Some of them have to walk up to 7 km carrying their *rono* and it would take a day before they find a vehicle to ride on," she said.

She also said they need more mechanized tools to compete.

Henry Reyes, a DTI representative, said the agency had extended support to those engaged in bamboo craft in the province.

Violeta Cortez of the DTI said the provincial bamboo industrial cluster committee was formed in 2002 to make Abra the top bamboo producer in the Philippines and make bamboo the priority industry in the province.

"In craftsmanship and in prototyping, our weavers are really very good," said Reyes.

Copycats

"But there is a danger in giving out brochures to prospective customers because the prototypes are copied. Instead of ordering from us, they give the design to other manufacturers who produce the items for them," he said.

The DTI is sponsoring capability-building programs, training for workers, marketing development and skills upgrading to help the industry. Values orientation and financial management seminars are also scheduled for this year.

Cortez said the DTI was encouraging small-scale bamboo businessmen to join trade fairs.

"The problem is, most of the big manufacturers want monopoly and do not give chance for their small brothers to do well in the market," she said.

Micro enterprise law worries Finance

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has expressed serious concern over the generous tax breaks provision of the Barangay Micro Business Enterprises Act which, it said, could put in vain the government's efforts to increase revenue collection.

Finance Undersecretary Grace Tan said in a memorandum that the broad coverage of the BMBE law could exempt a significant number of taxpayers from paying income tax. This, she said, could result in considerable erosion of the government's tax base.

Under the BMBE Act, business entities with less than P3 million in assets and that are engaged in agri-processing, trading and services are exempted from the payment of income tax. The computation of the amount of assets even excludes the value of land capital, therefore allowing more enterprises to avail themselves of the tax perks.

Considering that the country's businesses are composed mostly of micro-enterprises, the government may lose a significant amount of income tax revenue when the law is implemented.

About 90 percent of enterprises in the country belong to micro category. Micro-enterprises are companies whose assets amount to P3 million and below.

"Congress tells us that we are not collecting enough revenue, but they are the ones who keep on giving tax incentives," said Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong in a press briefing.

Although the implementing rules and regulations of the BMBE Act have already been issued by the Department of Trade and Industry last year, the law's implementation is being derailed because the finance department has yet to come up with its guidelines.

The DOF said it has yet to discuss with the DTI the possibility of inserting some revisions in the the law's IRR to reduce the expected adverse effects of the law on the government's revenue collection.

Amatong said the DOF would have to first discuss its concerns over the law with the DTI before issuing the guidelines.

One of the DOF's biggest concerns is a provision saying that the basis for tax exemption will be the amount of a firm's assets and not its gross income.

Creation of transport security agency pushed

THE TRANSPORT department has asked Malacañang to certify as urgent a bill that will create a Transport Security Authority that will address security concerns in all forms of travel.

Transport officials likened the proposed agency to the United States' Department of Homeland Security. But the local version will be an attached agency of the Department of Transportation and Communication.

Pending the passage of the law, the department said it would focus first on strengthening air transport following the signing of an executive order last month that created the Office of Transportation Security.

The OTS, according to Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza, will have an annual budget of about P100 million. It will implement aviation security programs in the country.

"We will adopt new measures to tighten airport security and ensure that they are compliant with international standards," said Transport Undersecretary Cecilio Penilla, who also heads the new agency.

The first agenda, he said, would be to consolidate all security groups handling aviation. "There should only be one security group for all airports," Penilla added.

Currently, aviation security is an overlapping function of the Aviation Security Group, the Air Transport Office, the Philippine National Police, and even the Customs Police.

"We asked Malacañang to certify the bill creating the transport security office as urgent in light of the continued threats of terrorism," said Mendoza.

The proposed transport security agency will be in-charge of ensuring that water, road, and air travel are protected. Mendoza said the agency would also focus on maritime security given the recent sea disasters. *Clarissa S. Batino*

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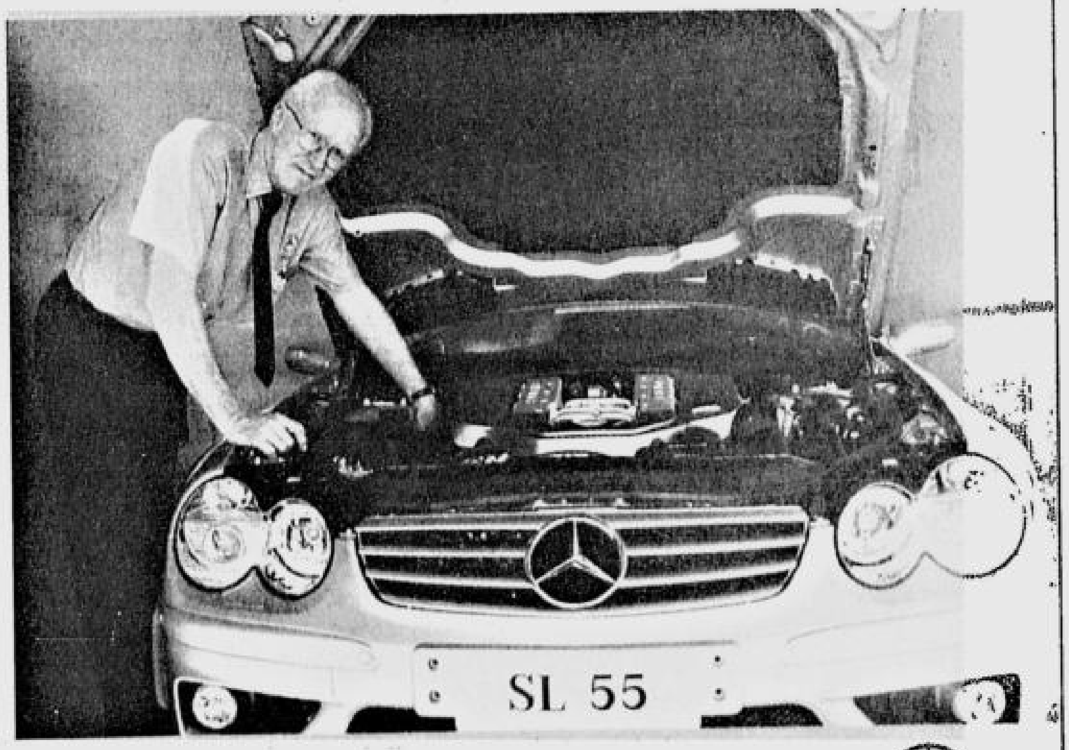

SCIENCE/HEALTH

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Sex education needed to curb teenage sex

By Tessa R. Salazar

Your body may look ready for it, your raging hormones may be asking for it, but that doesn't mean it's in your best interest to start doing it.

This, in a nutshell, was what Dr. Lyra Ruth Clemente-Chua, chair of the women's advocacy committee of the Philippine Obstetrics and Gynecologic Society (POGS), had to say about teen and premarital sex.

"There are three important reasons for not doing it just yet. These are: to prevent unwanted pregnancies, to prevent sexually transmitted infections and to prevent cervical cancers from developing in later years," she said.

Chua said these reasons were compelling enough to make adolescent reproductive health an important issue.

Engaging in adolescent sex can be physically damaging for the female.

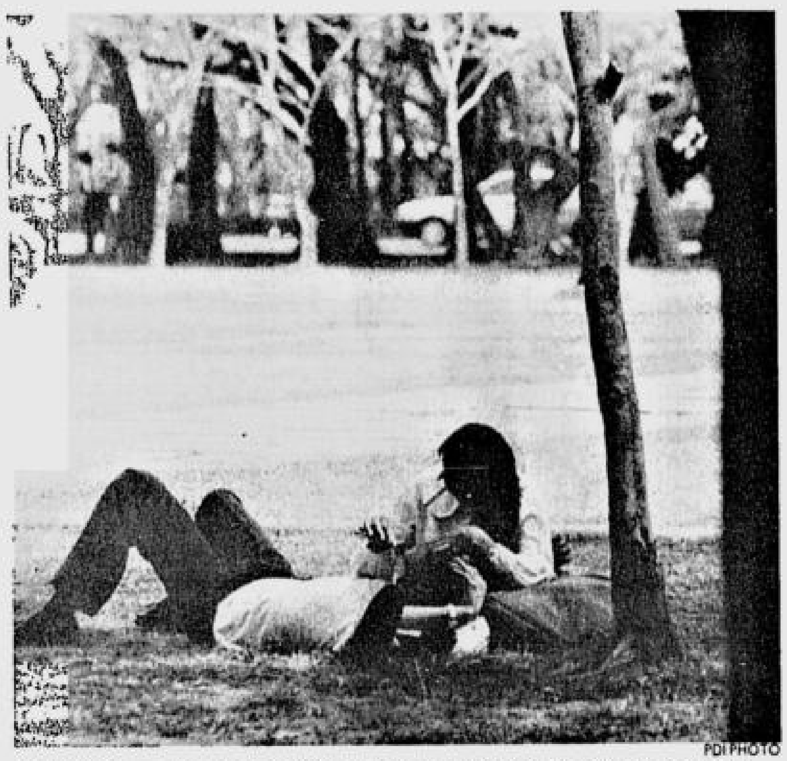
"The nature of the teenager's cervix is that at this stage its cells are not yet well-protected, thus sex can mean exposing the cervix to traumas," Chua said.

Having sex younger

Studies in the Philippines showed that 23 percent of people between 15 and 24 years had already engaged in premarital sex. And 70 percent of them did so without the use of contraceptives.

Four in 10 of our country's young adults are already in a live-in arrangement.

And of women between 20 and 24, one-third have already given birth before they even reached their 21st birthday.



PDI PHOTO

TEENAGE pregnancies remain a problem, and health experts say partly to blame is the love-struck teenagers' lack of access to information on sexual development that would help them make well-informed decisions.

Lack of information

Last January, the World Health Organization cited studies showing adolescents were largely uninformed about how best to avoid risky behaviors that led to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, pregnancy complications and sexually transmitted diseases.

The WHO said the lives of millions of adolescents worldwide were at risk because they did not have the information, skills, health services and support they needed to go through sexual development during adolescence and postpone sex until they are physically and socially mature and able to make well-informed, responsible decisions.

The WHO urged governments to promote the sexual health of the youth and allocate more funds to improve services for the youth sector.

It also observed that policymakers, public opinion leaders and parents withheld information about sexuality and reproduction from young people in the belief that this would dissuade them from becoming sexually active.

But it pointed out that good quality sex education did not necessarily lead to earlier or increased sexual activity among adolescents.

Why teen pregnancies happen

By Rebecca B. Singson, MD
Contributor

TEENAGE pregnancies are on the rise because people don't get enough information about their reproductive system and are not empowered with knowledge on contraception. The following misconceptions could lead to bigger problems:

Just this once. Many couples don't realize that a single act of intercourse could result in a pregnancy if the woman happens to be ovulating on that day. An egg is fertilizable only 24 hours in one month and the sperm lives only for 72 hours. It is amazing how many unwanted pregnancies have resulted from unplanned meetings.

No contact, no pregnancy. Many couples think that if the woman remains a virgin, as long as the hymen remains intact, she cannot get pregnant. There have been documented pregnancies arising from intimacies where the man deposits the sperm only on the external genitalia, thinking it cannot result in a pregnancy. Sperms are capable of swimming up the vaginal canal and up the cervix to reach the egg in the fallopian tube if the woman is fertile on that day.

Orgasm equals fertilization. Some men think pregnancy only occurs if the man and the woman have simultaneous orgasms. That is a fallacy. As long as the sperm is allowed to meet the egg at the time the woman is ovulating, she can be impregnated regardless of whether she enjoyed the act or not.

Sex during menstrual period

Contact during menses means no pregnancy. Just because a woman is menstruating does not mean she is protected from pregnancy. Some women have irregular or prolonged menses due to dysfunctional uterine bleeding, so its difficult to predict when an egg might be released. Some women bleed at the middle of their menstrual cycle, around day 13, 14 or 15 from day 1 of their menses. This can actually be ovulatory bleeding and can coincide with the release of the egg so the woman is actually fertile.

Coitus interruptus is safe. Some men think that if they withdraw immediately before orgasm, the woman cannot become pregnant. The truth is that during contact, a preejaculatory fluid is released which can cause pregnancy even if the man manages to withdraw prior to ejaculation.

Condom use is always protective. If the man wears the condom only when he is about to ejaculate, the preejaculatory fluid released before condom application can cause pregnancy. If he does not withdraw after orgasm, and grows limp in the condom, the sperm can leak from the sides of the rubber, thereby causing pregnancy. The condom can always rupture especially if the woman is not well-lubricated.

Calculating your safe period

Women know their safe period. Some women don't know if their cycles are shorter than 27 days or if they have irregular periods. Worse, some women base their safe period from the last day of their menses rather than on the first day. To find the unsafe period, note the days of your shortest cycle, e.g., 27 days. Subtract 18 from that number, 27 less 18 equals 9. The 9th day of the cycle is the start of your fertile day. Now, take the longest cycle, e.g., 32 days. Subtract 11 from it, so 32 less 11 equals 21. Therefore, your unsafe days are from day 9 to 21 of your cycle. It is safe to have contact between day 0 and 8 and from day 22 until menses come.

Sex equals love. Some single women are pressured into having sex by partners who demand it as an expression of love. If a man loves you enough, he will respect your desire not to be pressured into sex.

Having a baby can be one of the most rewarding experiences but it should not be wasted by having an unwelcome baby. Remember that the only fail-proof method of avoiding pregnancy is abstinence.

E-mail the author obmd@surfshop.net.ph.

Series No. 2

Diagnosing the causes of Erectile Dysfunction

The first step in finding the cause of Erectile Dysfunction (ED) is through the patient's medical and sexual history. The doctor, a urologist, interviews the patient to determine possible risk factors. Some doctors use a printed questionnaire which the patient answers before the interview.

The general medical history is important in identifying specific risk factors that may account for or contribute to the patient's erectile dysfunction.

For the medical history, the doctor will ask the patient questions about illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. The doctor will also ask the patient about any surgery, accidental injuries, smoking and drinking habits and what medications he has taken in the past year.

> The patient's medical and sexual history are important in finding the causes of erectile dysfunction.

The sexual history is needed to accurately define the patient's specific complaint and distinguish between true erectile dysfunction, changes in sexual desire and orgasmic or ejaculatory disturbances.

For sexual history, the doctor may ask these typical questions: "When was the last time you had a normal erection?" "Do you ever wake up in the morning with an erection?" "When was the last time you had sexual intercourse?" The patient may be asked whether his erections are painful, or if his penis is severely bent when erect. A "yes" to either question could indicate 'Peyronie's disease,' a condition caused by scar tissue in the penis.

Additional questions may be asked to find out if there could be psychological reasons for the patient's erectile problems. In some cases, the doctor may refer the patient to a specialist for more extensive psychological examination.

The next step after the medical and sexual history of the patient is the physical examination. During the physical examination, the doctor will pay particular attention to the genitals and will test nervous and vascular function as well as check for Peyronie's disease. The doctor may do a rectal examination to check the condition of the prostate. Samples of the patient's blood and urine may be tested in a laboratory. Laboratory tests include measuring testosterone levels and testing for diabetes and vascular problems such as elevated cholesterol or fat in the blood. If necessary, additional special tests may be conducted. An example is using high-frequency sound waves (ultrasound) to check the condition of penile arteries. Another example is observing the response to drugs injected into the penis that normally stimulate an erection.

Males exhibiting symptoms suggestive of erectile dysfunction are advised to see a doctor or a healthcare professional for proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment. *(Next week, Treatment options for Erectile Dysfunction)*

(For more information, log on to www.lilly.com)

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Rats and rovers

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

RECENTLY, I wrote about efforts to detect land mines through specially modified plants that turned red in the presence of explosives. Apparently Aresa is not alone in its efforts to promote safer ways of detecting land mines.

The Belgian organization Apopo has been training African giant pouched rats (they can grow the size of cats) to sniff out land mines. (On their first field assignment, the rats found nearly two dozen in Mozambique without detonating them).

Apopo has recently started training the rodents to detect tuberculosis as well. Imagine labs all over the world where giant rats in clear plastic cages sniff saliva samples and identify those which are positive for TB.

According to Bart Weetjens, director of the Apopo research center at the Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, using rats to test for TB is faster and cheaper than using human lab technicians. Tests have shown that the rats can test 150 saliva samples in 30 minutes with up to 92 percent detection accuracy.

There are currently 300 rats in the Apopo center, and the World Bank has just given enough funding to train another 400 rodents and expand clinical trials, which begin in July.

Water in Mars

But the TB-sniffing rats aren't the main event of the week.

"Liquid water once flowed through these rocks. It changed their texture, and it changed their chemistry. We've been able to read the telltale clue the water had left behind, giving us confidence in that conclusion."

These are the words of Dr. Steve Squyres, an astronomy professor at Cornell University and the man in charge of the science instruments on the Mars Exploration rover Opportunity. He gave the statement during a press conference held by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration earlier this week to announce that they have found evidence that there once had been water on Mars.

Blame the water findings on poor aim. Five weeks ago Opportunity missed its target landing site and, according to Edward Weiler, the associate Nasa administrator for space science, landed next to a small crater that "would have been a good, habitable environment."

Proof of water

So how did Nasa know that there once was water in some portions of the red planet?

Opportunity took samples of the bedrock in the crater and found it rich in iron oxides and sulfates. One of these iron sulfates is jarosite, a mineral that can be found on Earth in hot springs. In other words, part of Mars was once like the Laguna hot springs.

The bedrock in the crater also bears signs of crossbedding, referring to varying levels of deposits caused by directional shifts of wind or water, lending credence to the water-on-Mars theory.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology geologist John Grotzinger also points to the presence of vugs, spherules and rock layers as proof that the crater was once filled with water.

Vugs and spherules

Imagine puddles of salt water allowed to evaporate so the dried salt could be collected. The gaping holes left by the removed salt crystals are what scientists call vugs.

A spherule is a small round object formed by violent events such as a meteorite falling from the sky, a volcanic eruption (borne out by the fact that the Martian bedrock has several layers of volcanic ash), or even a chemical reaction in porous rocks.

If the spherules Opportunity found had been grouped together, scientists would have accepted either the meteorite or volcano explanations. However, because the spherules were in different layers of rock, the notion that the crater was once under water is equally credible.

Different terrain

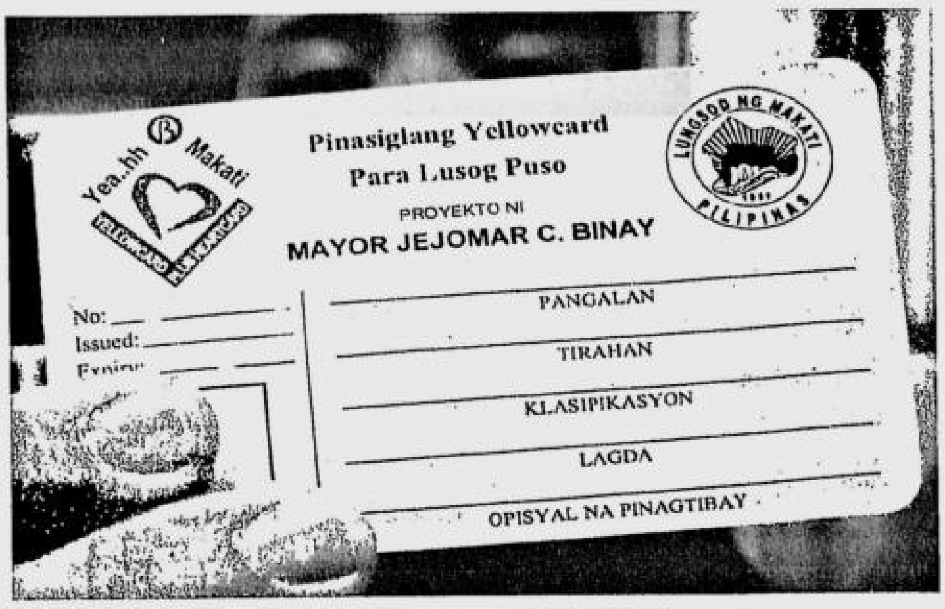
Spirit, the first Mars rover, landed on the opposite side of the planet, and in very different surroundings. While the terrain in Meridiani Planum where Opportunity roams is flat and covered with soil and pebbles, Spirit is wandering around the very rocky Gusev Crater. The good news is that they appear to be living up to their names.

Scientists are planning more studies to verify their findings, including a more in-depth analysis of the rocks in Opportunity's territory.

What will it mean if there really was water on Mars? Maybe we can find out why it dried up, and learn to keep Earth awash. Maybe we can colonize Mars and the moon so our planet would not be overworked by the expanding population.

And maybe we'll find out if Martians really did exist and what happened to them. All this and more as we continue to explore our solar system—stay tuned.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.



HEALTH card initially for residents of barangays Bangkal and Pembo

Makati experiments with heart card

Text and photo
by Charles E. Buban

MAKATI has become the first city in the country to try a new health card that seeks to support people with cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Patterned after the city's yellow card program, the Pinasiglang Yellowcard Para Lusog Puso (HeartCard-Yellow Card Plus) provides outpatient CVD healthcare services from accredited healthcare providers to Makati residents belonging to low- to middle-income groups.

"This HeartCard program will doubtless reduce the incidence of CVD among our residents, primarily through prevention and early diagnosis," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay during the program's launch last month.

CVD remains the city's biggest killer: 547 in 1,000 deaths are attributed to the disease, which include aneurysm, stroke and heart attack.

Makati has a population of more than 500,000.

Two barangays

The HeartCard is now being implemented in two barangays (Bangkal and Pembo) but will eventually be made available in the remaining 31 barangays by yearend.

The project is a unique collaboration of the Makati City Health Department, nonprofit organization Heath Futures Foundation Inc., the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and pharmaceutical giant Merck Sharp & Dohme Philippines.

"We are currently prioritizing programs that facilitate access to healthcare services and we decided to focus on cardiovascular care because this is the No. 1 cause of mortality in the country as well as in Makati," said MSD corporate affairs director Christine Liwanag.

The HeartCard entitles qualified residents to medical and hospitalization services at the Makati Medical Center and the city government-managed Ospital ng Makati.

The city government spends for the medical and hospitalization needs of card holders.

A card holder will be given a clinic visitation record booklet that documents family medical history, blood pressure, body mass index (BMI) and medicines taken. The booklet contains health tips on how to change one's lifestyle.

Adults surveyed

The HFFI in partnership with MSD conducted a study on Makati's adult population to determine the prevalence of common risk factors for CVD.

"Although Makati is the most developed urban center in the country, there are still some areas within the city whose families belong to the lower socioeconomic groups and need the support of the city government to enhance their access to cardiovascular care," said city health officer Dr. Ma. Lourdes Salud.

The survey found that one in three adults were hypertensive and about half were overweight.

It found that hypertension was the most common risk factor for CVD while smoking ranked second.

The survey also found that about one in every eight respondents had a stroke and 5 percent were diabetics.

Math help

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

MATH remains difficult for many people. A concerned mother, Joan Abaño [jt_abaño@yahoo.com] tells this story:

I have a 10-year-old daughter. She's in 5th grade in PCU Elementary School. She's in the top 10 of the class but I know that if I just pushed her a little more, she could do better. I was still working when she started school, I stopped working when she was in her 3rd grade.

She is not behind in math but she is not focused. I wish she could be more interested in this subject. I always tell her to do extra studies in math, but I know I also need to do my part. I really want to help her.

I always dreamed that she would be enrolled in a good science high school. Since we cannot afford schools like Ateneo, maybe she can try Philippine Science High School. But with her current performance I know she cannot make it, that's why I'm trying to help her. Please advise me how I could be of help to my child.

Your daughter is fortunate to have a mother who stopped working to focus on her.

There are numerous reasons why math is feared and disliked by many, but suffice it to say that if your daughter is in the top 10, then she has the capability to do well. I am not sure what your standards are, but most parents will be happy if their children belong to the brightest 10 in class.

My advice is: encourage her, but don't be a stage mother, or else your child will end up hating math and hating school.

Good study habits

Anyway, you say that your child does not focus. What does she do? Does she fidget or just plain turn away when you ask her to do her homework? She is only in Grade 5, and although she should already be developing good study habits, children still need guidance at this age.

Since you are not working, I assume you are her main tutor. The most important thing to do now is to ensure that she starts practicing good study habits (a set time and place to study, no TV or play before finishing homework, perhaps even no TV during weekdays—you get the idea).

At the level of arithmetic, which is pretty basic, your daughter needs practice. You don't have to spend a lot. Make practice tests and exercises for her based on her book and exams. (I am assuming here that your daughter, under your care, has answered every single exercise in the textbook. If not, start from there. If she wants to do well in math, she needs to spend at least one hour a day on this subject alone.)

You have access to the Net. There are millions of sites with math exercises. You can download and print them for ready use.

Finding a compromise

As for the Ateneo, the high school is exclusively for boys, so unless policies change in the next few years, your daughter will have to try to make it to Philippine Science. You are right, the entrance test is tough, and she needs a solid background in elementary math.

But you haven't told me if your daughter wants to go there. Perhaps she doesn't focus in math because she doesn't want to go to a science school. What are her interests? I hate to say this, but what she desires is more important than your dreams. (The two of you can always come to a compromise.)

My book "Eureka!" has suggestions on how to deal with various math problems. It should be available in National Bookstore. Or order directly from Anvil Sales at 637-3621 or 637-5141 (look for Lorie or Bong), or e-mail at anvilsales@eudoramail.com.

If you (and she) dream of entering Ateneo, then do well in high school and come to us for college. Good luck!

Amy Gallardo [Amelia.gallardo@att.net] writes:

I live in Texas with two kids, who are in junior high and middle school. They are good in all subjects except math. What is the title of your book?

Please see my reply to the previous letter.

Nancy Capina of Six Logistics Philippines Inc. [nancy@siix.com.ph] has a request:

We wish to inform you that we really appreciated your article regarding mathematical problem-solving. We would like to request some copies for our reference.

I am glad you enjoyed the article. However, for additional copies of the column, I am not the person to turn to. Call INQUIRER sales and distribution, tell them the issue date, and they should be able to send you back copies.

E-mail the author at blessbook@yahoo.com.

Care for the newborn skin

By Cynthia Cuayo-Juico, MD

The joy of having a new baby in a family is like a dream come true. But the reality of routinely caring for the baby, especially his skin, can be a nightmare.

A new mother is likely to seek all kinds of advice — from the relatives to friends, from books to magazines. The bottom line is, in cases of conflicting advice, parents look up to their pediatrician for a solution.

A newborn's skin, which is 40-60% thinner than an adult's, helps regulates temperature and helps in immunologic protection and neurosensory perception. In full-term babies, the skin is covered by vernix, a natural covering that protects the baby from water loss, trauma, absorption of toxins and infection. But it is shed and/or wiped off. So what is the best care we can offer to such a vital organ?

There are guidelines on the care of the skin of a normal term baby:

1. Bathing newborns serves a variety of function. It washes away the urine and stool residues, and decreases microbial colonization. It is also a medium for bonding between the caregiver and the baby through the touch of the hands against the infant skin. But we have to remember that bathing may place the newborn on the risk of hypothermia, exposure to irritating substances, and absorptions of toxic compounds.

There are no studies that say that one wash is better than the other. Just remember, USE A WASH WITH A MOISTURIZER THAT IS LESS IRRITATING AND DRYING TO THE SKIN.

NO PERFUME and HYPOALLERGENIC are the descriptions of such wash. Skin pH serves as natural form of antimicrobial protection. Skin pH of less than 5 discourages the development of such bacteria. So use non-alkaline wash.

In other words: keep bathing simple and gentle, using lukewarm water and mild wash, to be rinsed adequately to minimize skin irritation.

2. You may USE LOTION if the skin becomes dry, especially on the legs and feet.

3. In recent studies, disposable diapers have an advantage over cloth ones, especially if detergents used are not washed out thoroughly.

No matter what care we give the best prevention is BREASTFEEDING. Babies who are breastfed have less skin irritation problems due to the physiologic pH of the waste matter of human breastmilk-fed babies.

Dr. Cuayo-Juico is chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Committee on Research at the Manila Doctors Hospital; chair of the Committee on School Health of the Philippines Pediatric Society and chair of the Committee on Drug and Nutrition of the Philippine Medical Association.

NEW!
Johnson's baby sorbolene cream wash
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From the recognized and trusted worldwide leader in babycare —Johnson's Baby — comes another innovation that seeks to relieve newborn babies of the discomforts brought about by dry, sensitive skin: **Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash.**

It's a highly moisturizing cream wash that is both mild and soap-free/non-drying. This means that it not only helps revitalize dry or damaged skin, but it also makes sure that moisture is retained after washing.

Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is also fragrance-free and has no antiseptic. (Antiseptic has been found to have a tendency of further drying the skin.) And, of course, being Johnson's Baby, it's Clinically Proven Mild® so you can be sure that it's safe to use even on the most delicate skin of a newborn baby.

Over and above this, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash outperforms its current competitors in terms of skin moisturization & moisture-retention based on technical studies conducted using lab instruments that measures skin moisture levels. In addition, an in-use test supervised by medical professionals was conducted among babies with dry skin. Date showed that Sorbolene received a 91% satisfaction rating from mothers who had tried it on their babies, while 96% of pediatricians who had initially tested the product claimed they would recommend it to their patients.

In terms of price, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is just half the price of the leading competitor brand. At Php 70.85 SRP, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is a very affordable product that will allow the vast majority of mothers to relieve their newborn babies of the discomfort and pain brought about by dry, sensitive skin.

Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is available at your local Mercury Drug Store, Watson's and other leading drug stores in your area.

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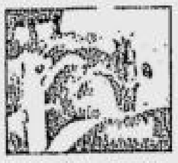

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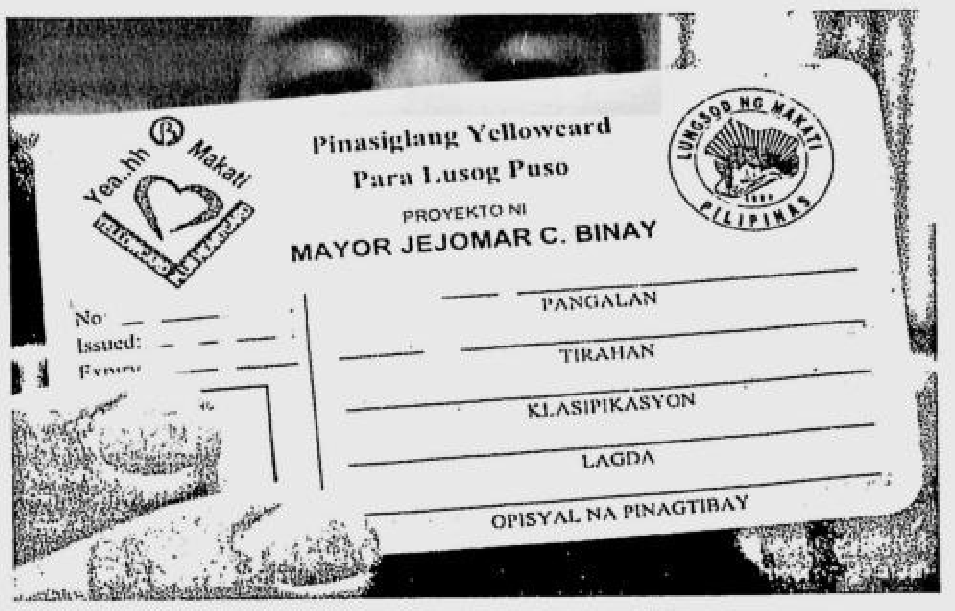

HEALTH card initially for residents of barangays Bangkal and Pembo

Makati experiments with heart card

Text and photo
by Charles E. Buban

MAKATI has become the first city in the country to try a new health card that seeks to support people with cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Patterned after the city's yellow card program, the Pinasiglang Yellowcard Para Lusog Puso (HeartCard-Yellow Card Plus) provides outpatient CVD healthcare services from accredited healthcare providers to Makati residents belonging to low- to middle-income groups.

"This HeartCard program will doubtless reduce the incidence of CVD among our residents, primarily through prevention and early diagnosis," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay during the program's launch last month.

CVD remains the city's biggest killer: 547 in 1,000 deaths are attributed to the disease, which include aneurysm, stroke and heart attack.

Makati has a population of more than 500,000.

Two barangays

The HeartCard is now being implemented in two barangays (Bangkal and Pembo) but will eventually be made available in the remaining 31 barangays by yearend.

The project is a unique collaboration of the Makati City Health Department, nonprofit organization Heath Futures Foundation Inc., the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and pharmaceutical giant Merck Sharp & Dohme Philippines.

"We are currently prioritizing programs that facilitate access to healthcare services and we decided to focus on cardiovascular care because this is the No. 1 cause of mortality in the country as well as in Makati," said MSD corporate affairs director Christine Liwanag.

The HeartCard entitles qualified residents to medical and hospitalization services at the Makati Medical Center and the city government-managed Ospital ng Makati.

The city government spends for the medical and hospitalization needs of card holders.

A card holder will be given a clinic visitation record booklet that documents family medical history, blood pressure, body mass index (BMI) and medicines taken. The booklet contains health tips on how to change one's lifestyle.

Adults surveyed

The HFFI in partnership with MSD conducted a study on Makati's adult population to determine the prevalence of common risk factors for CVD.

"Although Makati is the most developed urban center in the country, there are still some areas within the city whose families belong to the lower socioeconomic groups and need the support of the city government to enhance their access to cardiovascular care," said city health officer Dr. Ma. Lourdes Salud.

The survey found that one in three adults were hypertensive and about half were overweight.

It found that hypertension was the most common risk factor for CVD while smoking ranked second.

The survey also found that about one in every eight respondents had a stroke and 5 percent were diabetics.

Care for the newborn skin

By Cynthia Cuayo-Juico, MD

The joy of having a new baby in a family is like a dream come true. But the reality of routinely caring for the baby, especially his skin, can be a nightmare.

A new mother is likely to seek all kinds of advice — from the relatives to friends, from books to magazines. The bottom line is, in cases of conflicting advice, parents look up to their pediatrician for a solution.

A newborn's skin, which is 40-60% thinner than an adult's, helps regulates temperature and helps in immunologic protection and neurosensory perception. In full-term babies, the skin is covered by vernix, a natural covering that protects the baby from water loss, trauma, absorption of toxins and infection. But it is shed and/or wiped off. So what is the best care we can offer to such a vital organ?

There are guidelines on the care of the skin of a normal term baby:

1. Bathing newborns serves a variety of function. It washes away the urine and stool residues, and decreases microbial colonization. It is also a medium for bonding between the caregiver and the baby through the touch of the hands against the infant skin. But we have to remember that bathing may place the newborn on the risk of hypothermia, exposure to irritating substances, and absorptions of toxic compounds.

There are no studies that say that one wash is better than the other. Just remember, USE A WASH WITH A MOISTURIZER THAT IS LESS IRRITATING AND DRYING TO THE SKIN.

NO PERFUME and HYPOALLERGENIC are the descriptions of such wash. Skin pH serves as natural form of antimicrobial protection. Skin pH of less than 5 discourages the development of such bacteria. So use non-alkaline wash.

In other words: keep bathing simple and gentle, using lukewarm water and mild wash, to be rinsed adequately to minimize skin irritation.

2. You may USE LOTION if the skin becomes dry, especially on the legs and feet.

3. In recent studies, disposable diapers have an advantage over cloth ones, especially if detergents used are not washed out thoroughly.

No matter what care we give the best prevention is BREASTFEEDING. Babies who are breastfed have less skin irritation problems due to the physiologic pH of the waste matter of human breastmilk-fed babies.

Dr. Cuayo-Juico is chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Committee on Research at the Manila Doctors Hospital; chair of the Committee on School Health of the Philippines Pediatric Society and chair of the Committee on Drug and Nutrition of the Philippine Medical Association.

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From the recognized and trusted worldwide leader in babycare —Johnson's Baby — comes another innovation that seeks to relieve newborn babies of the discomforts brought about by dry, sensitive skin: **Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash.**

It's a highly moisturizing cream wash that is both mild and soap-free/non-drying. This means that it not only helps revitalize dry or damaged skin, but it also makes sure that moisture is retained after washing.

Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is also fragrance-free and has no antiseptic. (Antiseptic has been found to have a tendency of further drying the skin.) And, of course, being Johnson's Baby, it's Clinically Proven Mild* so you can be sure that it's safe to use even on the most delicate skin of a newborn baby.

Over and above this, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash outperforms its current competitors in terms of skin moisturization & moisture-retention based on technical studies conducted using lab instruments that measures skin moisture levels. In addition, an in-use test supervised by medical professionals was conducted among babies with dry skin. Date showed that Sorbolene received a 91% satisfaction rating from mothers who had tried it on their babies, while 96% of pediatricians who had initially tested the product claimed they would recommend it to their patients.

In terms of price, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is just half the price of the leading competitor brand. At Php 70.85 SRP, Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is a very affordable product that will allow the vast majority of mothers to relieve their newborn babies of the discomfort and pain brought about by dry, sensitive skin.

Johnson's Baby Sorbolene Cream Wash is available at your local Mercury Drug Store, Watson's and other leading drug stores in your area.

PAID A [illegible] EMEN

Math help

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

MATH remains difficult for many people. A concerned mother, Joan Abaño [jt_abaño@yahoo.com] tells this story:

I have a 10-year-old daughter. She's in 5th grade in PCU Elementary School. She's in the top 10 of the class but I know that if I just pushed her a little more, she could do better. I was still working when she started school, I stopped working when she was in her 3rd grade.

She is not behind in math but she is not focused. I wish she could be more interested in this subject. I always tell her to do extra studies in math, but I know I also need to do my part. I really want to help her.

I always dreamed that she would be enrolled in a good science high school. Since we cannot afford schools like Ateneo, maybe she can try Philippine Science High School. But with her current performance I know she cannot make it, that's why I'm trying to help her. Please advise me how I could be of help to my child.

Your daughter is fortunate to have a mother who stopped working to focus on her.

There are numerous reasons why math is feared and disliked by many, but suffice it to say that if your daughter is in the top 10, then she has the capability to do well. I am not sure what your standards are, but most parents will be happy if their children belong to the brightest 10 in class.

My advice is: encourage her, but don't be a stage mother, or else your child will end up hating math and hating school.

Good study habits

Anyway, you say that your child does not focus. What does she do? Does she fidget or just plain turn away when you ask her to do her homework? She is only in Grade 5, and although she should already be developing good study habits, children still need guidance at this age.

Since you are not working, I assume you are her main tutor. The most important thing to do now is to ensure that she starts practicing good study habits (a set time and place to study, no TV or play before finishing homework, perhaps even no TV during weekdays—you get the idea).

At the level of arithmetic, which is pretty basic, your daughter needs practice. You don't have to spend a lot. Make practice tests and exercises for her based on her book and exams. (I am assuming here that your daughter, under your care, has answered every single exercise in the textbook. If not, start from there. If she wants to do well in math, she needs to spend at least one hour a day on this subject alone.)

You have access to the Net. There are millions of sites with math exercises. You can download and print them for ready use.

Finding a compromise

As for the Ateneo, the high school is exclusively for boys, so unless policies change in the next few years, your daughter will have to try to make it to Philippine Science. You are right, the entrance test is tough, and she needs a solid background in elementary math.

But you haven't told me if your daughter wants to go there. Perhaps she doesn't focus in math because she doesn't want to go to a science school. What are her interests? I hate to say this, but what she desires is more important than your dreams. (The two of you can always come to a compromise.)

My book "Eureka!" has suggestions on how to deal with various math problems. It should be available in National Bookstore. Or order directly from Anvil Sales at 637-3621 or 637-5141 (look for Lorie or Bong), or e-mail at anvilsales@eudoramail.com.

If you (and she) dream of entering Ateneo, then do well in high school and come to us for college. Good luck!

Amy Gallardo [Amelia.gallardo@att.net] writes:

I live in Texas with two kids, who are in junior high and middle school. They are good in all subjects except math. What is the title of your book?

Please see my reply to the previous letter.

Nancy Capina of Six Logistics Philippines Inc. [nancy@siix.com.ph] has a request:

We wish to inform you that we really appreciated your article regarding mathematical problem-solving. We would like to request some copies for our reference.

I am glad you enjoyed the article. However, for additional copies of the column, I am not the person to turn to. Call INQUIRER sales and distribution, tell them the issue date, and they should be able to send you back copies.

E-mail the author at blessbook@yahoo.com

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US economic data upbeat ahead of key jobs report

WASHINGTON—Led by the strongest monthly chain store sales gain in three years, data reported on Thursday reinforced the picture of a strengthening US economy as markets and economists awaited Friday's jobs report for February.

"There are a number of cross currents going on any time you get four different sources of data. But today's information has, at the margin, been consistent with upward strength in the economy," said Stephen Stanley at RBS Greenwich Capital, in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The sales numbers followed government data showing US workers were slightly less productive than first thought in the final three months of last year, suggesting companies may have to hire more workers to meet demand. Another report indicated they may be firing less, as new weekly claims for jobless benefits fell last week, as expected.

Reinforcing the upbeat message, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Target Corp., J.C. Penney Co. Inc., Federated Department Stores Inc., Gap Inc. and Kohl's Corp. all posted above-forecast February sales.

Overall, February same-store sales— a measure of sales at stores open at least a year—rose 6.7 percent, well ahead of expectations of a 5.7-percent gain, Thomson First Call said.

It was the biggest jump since First Call started tracking the data in November 2000.

"This morning's chain store sales were extraordinarily strong for the second month in a row," said Stanley.

The Labor Department said first-time applications for unemployment benefits fell 7,000 to 345,000 in the week ended Feb. 28, versus a revised 352,000 the prior week. Wall Street had predicted 345,000 new claims.

The latest reading continues the relative stability of new claims ranging from 339,000 to 368,000 since mid-December, suggesting the pace of layoffs had steadied.

"With robust economic growth and improving business confidence, we expect to see accelerating employment gains in the months ahead," said Gary Bigg at Bank of America Securities. *Reuters*

Dell to step down as CEO

DALLAS—Michael Dell is stepping aside as chief executive of the computer company he started in his college dorm room 20 years ago and built into a powerhouse whose low-cost, direct-selling model revolutionized the industry.

Dell, 39, will be replaced by president and chief operating officer Kevin Rollins in July, Dell Inc. announced Thursday. However, Michael Dell will remain involved in day-to-day business as chairman.

The selection of Rollins as the successor was not a surprise. He was seen as Dell's right-hand man as the company grew to become the world's leading seller of personal computers. The two men work side by side in offices separated by a sliding glass door that is left open.

The timing, however, caught analysts off guard. Dell, who became one of the richest men in America as his company grew, had given no strong signals that he would step away from the CEO's duties.

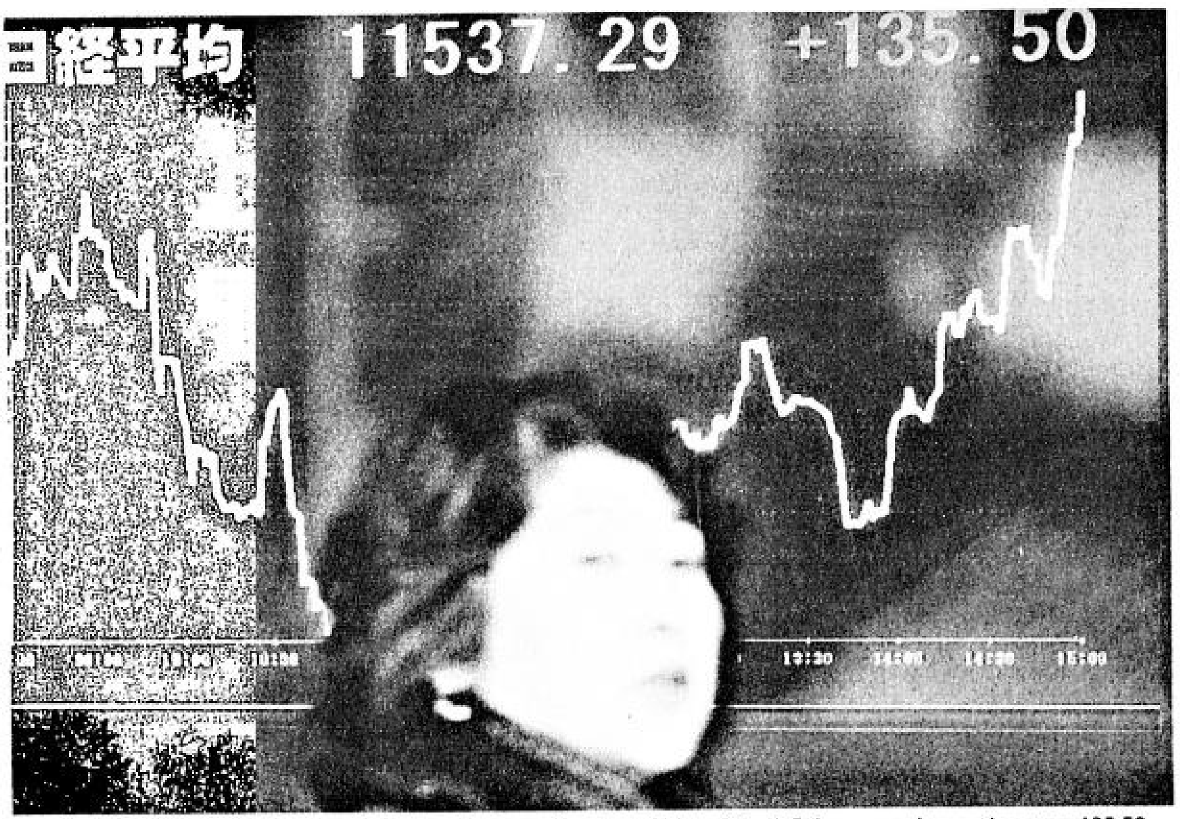
The board of directors, meeting in New York, named the 51-year-old Rollins CEO effective at the annual shareholder meeting July 16. Rollins also will be nominated at the July meeting to replace a retired company executive on the board.

The company cast the change as cementing the roles the two men have played recently: Dell concentrating on new technology and ways to meet customers' demands, and Rollins focusing on strategy and operations.

Dell Inc., based in Round Rock, Texas, jousts with Hewlett-Packard Co. for the title of world's top seller of PCs.

Dell earned $2.65 billion on sales of $41.44 billion last year. Last month the company reported that fourth-quarter earnings rose 24 percent from a year earlier, and Dell and Rollins gave an upbeat assessment of first-quarter sales.

The company has ground out one successful quarter after another, usually surpassing Wall Street's expectations even during the technology bust. *AP*



A PEDESTRIAN passes before a share prices chart at downtown Tokyo, March 5. Japanese share prices rose 135.50 points to close at 11,537.29 points at the Tokyo Stock Exchange at a fresh 21-month high, led by gains in select exporters as the yen weakened further against the US dollar. AFP

Oil jumps on Opec cuts; Venezuela in turmoil

NEW YORK—Oil prices jumped on Thursday on growing signals the Opec cartel will carry out production cuts planned for April and amid political turmoil in Venezuela, a key US supplier.

Turmoil in Opec-member Venezuela also supported crude.

Protests demanding President Hugo Chavez submit to a recall vote have shut some businesses and schools.

In a surprise announcement on Thursday, Venezuela's ambassador to the United Nations, Milos Alcalay, said he was resigning in protest over the policies of the left-wing president.

"The resignation of Venezuela's UN ambassador highlights the lack of support for the present regime," said Nauman Barakat, a senior vice president at Refco in New York.

Crude prices have risen nearly $4 since Feb. 10, when Opec decided to cut output by a million barrels per day on April 1 and eliminate leakage above official production quotas.

Signs that Opec would implement the April cuts despite oil's price strength fueled Thursday's rapid rebound from a fall of nearly 90 cents on Wednesday, when the US government reported a build of 2 million barrels in crude oil stocks.

A top Iranian oil official said on Wednesday that Iran, Opec's second biggest producer, will cut back crude oil supply contracts with customers in the Mediterranean from April 1, in line with its lower Opec quota.

Oil industry sources have said they expected Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil supplier, to cut back crude exports during April in line with an Opec pact to curb production. Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates have also cut planned April sales.

"There's this feeling that Opec will make good on its promise to cut output by April," said Phil Flynn, a market analyst at Alaron Trading in Chicago.

The US energy secretary said in Thursday the Bush administration was worried about soaring retail gasoline prices, which recently topped $1.70 per gallon nationwide.

The head of the US government's Energy Information Administration, Guy Caruso, said he expected retail gasoline prices to set a record high in March. *Reuters*

Intel cuts sales target

SAN FRANCISCO—Intel Corp. on Thursday lowered the midpoint of its quarterly revenue forecast by $100 million—missing Wall Street expectations—as an oversupply of computer chips to Asia sapped sales to the region.

Intel, the world's largest chip maker, said it now expected revenue of $8 billion to $8.2 billion, with a midpoint of $8.1 billion.

In January, the Santa Clara, California-based company had forecast revenue of $7.9 billion to $8.5 billion, with a midpoint of $8.2 billion.

Intel shares dipped about 2 percent in after-hours trading.

"We had some inventory build in Asia and Japan in the first quarter, which we think has been resolved by now, but was out there," chief financial officer Andy Bryant told analysts during a scheduled mid-quarter conference call.

Ashok Kumar, a semiconductor analyst with Piper Jaffray, said there may be a glut of notebook computers on the market, which could mean that computer makers need fewer Intel chips in the first quarter.

"The writing was on the wall," Kumar said. "I think the market was oversupplied in the December quarter." *Reuters*

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IMF's Koehler resigns

BERLIN/WASHINGTON—Horst Koehler resigned as IMF chief on Thursday to seek the German presidency, leaving the fund's top job open prematurely and reigniting a politically charged debate over who should run the world's financial firefighter.

His deputy, Anne Krueger, will replace him until member nations agree on a successor.

Germany's opposition parties—which chose Koehler for the post—control the special assembly that elects the president, so he is almost certain to be elected on May 23.

"I am deeply honored," he told reporters in Washington. "I accept this nomination today and according to the rules of the IMF, I have to resign immediately."

Clearly taken aback by the speed of events, Koehler said he had mixed feelings about going.

"I am leaving the fund with a laughing and crying eye. I am laughing because it is an honor, it is a new challenge, but I am crying also because I like this institution," he said. He will leave Washington for Germany on Friday.

The fund, with 184 member states, has in the past 20 years waded into crises in nations ranging from Argentina to Indonesia offering billions of dollars in rescue loans.

Koehler's departure launches a search to fill a job that has gone to a European since the IMF's 1945 inception. Sister lender the World Bank is typically headed by an American, shutting out Japan and the developing world.

The 2000 resignation of former IMF chief Michel Camdessus sparked an ugly debate between Europe, which wanted the job in European hands, and nations that saw this tradition as outdated.

Washington-based fund watchers hope this time for a more dignified search for the best-qualified candidate, irrespective of nationality.

Some countries believe a multinational advisory committee should choose, lessening the impact of politics. *Reuters*

World economy improving; Europe lags, IMF paper says

LEIPZIG, Germany—The International Monetary Fund sees potential "upside surprises" to global growth in the short term, but medium-term risks including rising interest rates, according to a document seen by Reuters.

"There is the potential for upside surprises to growth in the short run but key risks and challenges remain," the document prepared for a meeting of G20 deputy finance ministers and deputy central bankers that ended on Thursday said.

The document said most US indicators pointed to a robust expansion, but noted payrolls were still below year-earlier levels and employment must pick up to support private consumption as the impact of tax and interest rate cuts wanes.

Evidence of a decisive pick-up in the euro area was still absent. But even there the recovery was expected to gather pace, "although a further appreciation of the euro could adversely affect growth," the document dated Feb. 27 said.

The euro was trading just under $1.25 on Feb. 27 and has since dropped to around $1.22.

The paper said a recovery could also be blown off course if current account imbalances triggered a sharp reversal in investor confidence.

A separate paper prepared for the meeting by the IMF and World Bank dated Feb. 19 said these imbalances were mainly located in the United States, Japan and emerging Asia.

"While the realignment of major exchange rates over the past two years has been in the appropriate direction, projections based on current exchange rates indicate that global imbalances are likely to be reduced only moderately going forward," it said.

Further appreciation of the euro "could stunt the nascent euro area recovery" and similarly "further appreciation of the yen would jeopardize the recovery ... while increasing deflationary pressures (in Japan)," it added.

The G20 meeting groups members of the Group of Seven major developed countries and large emerging economies. *Reuters*

Dollar rises to 4-mo highs but Asian stocks decline

SINGAPORE—The dollar rose to four-month highs against the yen on Friday, helping boost Japanese exporters while other Asian share markets fell in choppy trade.

The dollar hit 111.43 yen, extending a month-long rally as investors acted ahead of February jobs data due later in the day, and as wariness persisted about Japan's yen intervention policy.

The Nikkei average ended up 1.19 percent at 11,537.29, its highest close since June 6, 2002, as buying of shares in exporters on the weaker yen offset any downside after Intel narrowed its revenue forecast in New York.

However, MSCI's broadest index of shares outside Japan was struggling to hold onto a 0.1-percent gain, with Taiwan shares falling from 41-month highs, and South Korean and Hong Kong counters also seeing red.

"The Tokyo market is just like a speeding bullet train now and nothing can stop its run, even Intel," said Masayoshi Okamoto, head of dealing at Jujiya Securities.

The Nikkei has risen in seven of the past eight sessions.

Elsewhere in Asia, the benchmark Korea Composite Stock Price Index was off Thursday's 22-month high, falling 0.23 percent to 905.38 points, while Taiwan shares came off a 3 1/2 year high from early trade as investors reacted to Intel's disappointing forecast.

The TAIEX share index ended down 1.29 percent at 6,943.68, with Nanya Tech Corp., Taiwan's largest memory chipmaker, losing 4.46 percent and the wider tech sub-index dropping 0.52 percent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index edged lower by 0.06 percent in afternoon trade, as wary investors dumped banking shares and kept an eye on whether funds were moving out of local equities on gains in the US dollar.

HSBC Holdings Plc, the world's second-largest bank by market value, dropped 0.82 percent.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index rose 1.07 percent, while the Dow Jones industrial average fell 0.05 percent on Thursday. Intel gave its forecast after the closing bell.

US crude oil jumped 26 cents to $36.90 per barrel, as investors also expressed concern over political problems in oil producer Venezuela. *Reuters*

WORKERS hand out books on Chinese laws at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing before the opening session of China's parliament, the National People's Congress, March 5. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao opened the annual NPC session on Friday stressing the need to rein in the economy after years of breakneck growth and to throw a lifeline to hundreds of millions in the poor countryside.

REUTERS

China targets 7% growth

BEIJING—Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said Friday his government is targeting economic growth of 7 percent this year but urged a more equitable distribution of wealth and better controls on haphazard and redundant investment.

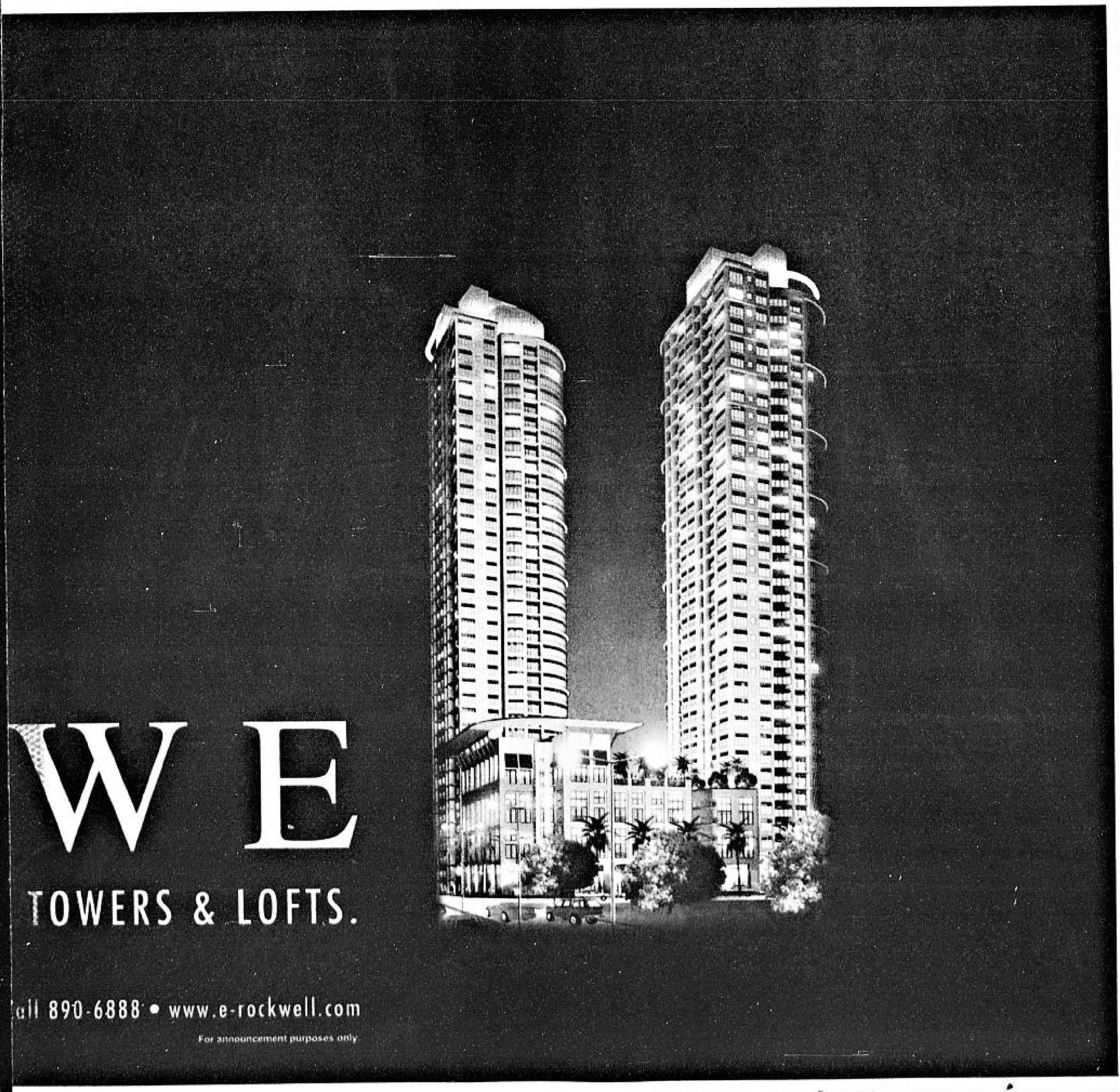
Speaking before some 5,000 delegates and political advisors to the annual session of the National People's Congress, Wen also pledged to keep the Chinese yuan "basically stable.

China grew at a blistering 9.1 percent in 2003 for its best performance since 1997 amid alarm bells that the economy was overheating while a widening gap between rural and urban areas was fueling increasing social discontent.

Still, Wen's forecast was widely believed to be a conservative estimate as China needs a minimum of 7 percent growth in order to create more jobs for a growing army of unemployed and redundant workers.

Since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the government has maintained an annual growth target of "around 7 percent." To this end, China will continue its expansive fiscal policy but channel more expenditures and investment into the rural sector, Wen said.

"We must adhere to the policy of expanding domestic demand and continue to implement a pro-active fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy," Wen said. *AFP*



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HEART DISEASE

Women's undisputed killer

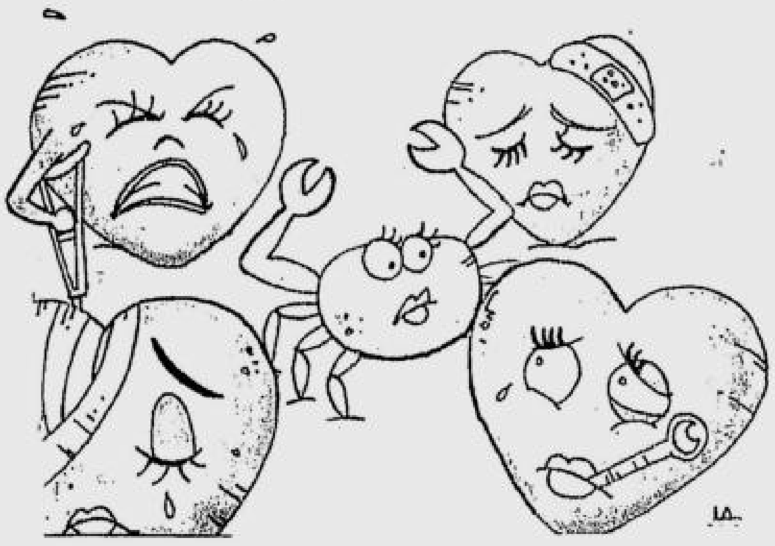
By Tessa R. Salazar

THE CURRENT thinking of men and women nowadays is that heart disease affects men more than it does women.

Well, here's heartbreaking news for women: heart diseases are still the leading cause of death among women worldwide.

And according to recent Philippine health statistics, heart diseases are the leading cause of death among Filipino women, claiming 40,000 lives a year against just 14,000 caused by cancer.

"Women are not so afraid of having heart disease, they are more afraid of having something like breast cancer without knowing that for every one woman with breast cancer, there are about four women who will die from heart disease," said Dr. Esperanza Cabral, past president of the Philippine Heart Association.



Checkups

Cabral recounted that most often among her patients, the men are accompanied by their wives but it's only the men who undergo heart checkups.

When she asked the wives, they answered they didn't feel anything unusual about their heart, so they felt they didn't need to be examined.

"I liken (this attitude) to a man and a woman riding a motorcycle. Usually the guy wears the helmet, while the woman-rider doesn't wear one. She's unprotected," Cabral said.

Cabral, who is the president of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and the vice president of the Philippine Lipid Society, said heart diseases, at the very least, affect women as much as men.

She advises women to take all measures to prevent the onset of heart disease in the same way they ask their husbands or significant others to do the same thing.

A woman, even in her 20s or 30s, should already practice a "heart healthy lifestyle" which includes maintenance of ideal body weight, avoiding smoking, drinking moderately and exercising regularly. High blood pressure and cholesterol levels should be controlled. Diabetes-prone women should also control their sugar levels.

Accessible heart doctors

Most heart doctors are men. Of the more than 1,000 cardiologists in the country, only about 150 are women, said Cabral. She added that sometimes this difference in gender makes women hesitant to visit the heart doctor.

"But there are an increasing number of women cardiologists and they should seek them out if they want to be examined by women cardiologists rather than by male ones."

Cabral is the first and only female director of the Philippine Heart Center.

Licking metabolic syndrome with lifestyle change

By Esperanza Icasas-Cabral, MD
Contributor

A MAINSTAY in treating the dreaded metabolic syndrome, which is claiming thousands of lives daily worldwide, is a healthy lifestyle change.

Almost everyone attests to the health benefits of a balanced diet, regular exercise and abstinence from smoking. But the large majority of people who begin a program of healthy eating, exercise or smoking cessation eventually abandon it. Numerous excuses are given, such as lack of time, discomfort, inconvenience and expense. Each is a legitimate excuse, but at the core lies a deeper cause which is unwillingness to make a lifestyle change.

Whoever said change was easy? Just ask the smoker who is trying to quit or the couch potato who is trying to get more physical. Willing it is the absolute prerequisite to changing one's lifestyle. Taking action is not necessarily the next step. Very often, we think about it and then talk about it and finally, with the right support and a big leap of faith, we initiate the change.

Tips to break barriers

Here are a few tips to help you break the barriers that impede a successful lifestyle change.

Understand what you are up against. Do you have difficulty starting an exercise program? Your barriers could include embarrassment and anxiety about your physical appearance and lack of confidence in your physical abilities. If maintaining regular exercise is your major struggle, your obstacles could be boredom and perceived lack of time.

Progress your lifestyle change. Once your exercise program is under way, you might find yourself on a "plateau" where your fitness level does not seem to improve at all. Do not be discouraged. A little additional exercise may be all that is needed to push you to a new level.

Build confidence through education. Learning from print or broadcast media or from professionals will pay off in increased confidence. Don't expect to automatically know a new exercise or what a low fat diet means. There is nothing wrong with being a beginner and the more information you get the better your chances of maintaining lifestyle change.

Set realistic short-term goals. If your goal is to lose 50 pounds, it will be some time before you can feel successful about reaching your goal. Create a goal that will be easier and faster to accomplish and when you get there, set the next goal.

Support yourself. If you make a poor food choice or miss a workout, forgive yourself and get back on track at the next meal or the next gym session.

Set yourself up in a supportive environment. Find friends with similar goals and go through your lifestyle change with them.

Reframe your thinking. Tending to your health and looking after your physical health is saying that you are worthwhile and deserve special treatment. When you take care of your health, you prove to yourself that you are important and special.

ASK THE DENTIST

Paul R. De Castro, DMD

Moving tooth

MY TOOTH moves back and forth. Will I lose the tooth?

If the tooth is moving, it means there is less bone support. It would require more effort to bring the tooth to its optimum health. If the tooth has no pain, then cleaning it at regular intervals would strengthen the bone and the gum around it, and you will most likely keep the tooth.

If the tooth is painful only when you use it, then it might have to be splinted to another tooth for additional support. But if the tooth hurts all the time even after it is cleaned thoroughly, then it may be time to let the tooth go.

Political will to make medicines affordable

WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL elections just two months away, most of the candidates have already revealed their platforms or political agenda, and most of them have promised better health care delivery with more affordable but high-quality drugs.

The recent rollback in the price of some essential cardiovascular drugs by multinational companies has given hope that with political will and the cooperation of big drug companies, the dream of making available high-quality pharmaceutical products to Filipinos can be attained.

Main problem

Chronic diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes and cholesterol problems and lung diseases require long-term treatment, and patient compliance is usually the main problem behind inadequate or suboptimal treatment.

Unilab, a Filipino-owned company which is a leader in the pharmaceutical industry in the Asia-Pacific, has made it its mission to deliver effective and safe medicines at affordable prices.

By providing pharmacoeconomic drugs, Unilab is optimistic it can change the paradigm or practice of determining health-care cost.

"We have not only prevented unnecessary price increases in a specific market but we have contributed to the realization of the impossible, that is, for other companies to reduce prices of their drugs," said James Dio, Therapharma general manager.

First in medical history

The price rollback was the first in the medical industry in years. Patients were at the winning end with the 57-percent price reduction by a multinational company as it tried to match the prices of pharmacoeconomic drugs.

Unilab has committed an array of essential products for various common medical ailments such as high blood pressure, tuberculosis, asthma and diabetes.

"We hope that in partnership with the doctors and patients, we can also effect a similar lowering of prices in these other drug segments," Dio said.

MEDICAL FILES

Positive thinking and living during these times

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

WE HEAR many psychologists counsel that thoughts cause feelings, and the wrong kinds of thoughts can cause stressful feelings. We become what we think and feel. If we think we're sick, we literally become sick.

Every day, doctors see patients complaining of all sorts of aches and pains, but are not really sick. We call these cases psychosomatic illnesses, where the mind (psyche) influences the behavior of the body (soma).

Every day, we're confronted with a hundred small and big stresses, no matter what kind of life we live. The bad news about stress is that we create it. The good news is that since we create it, we can control it.

Positive living

People who claim our country is in the pits with no bright prospects are pathological pessimists, and probably deserve all the ulcers they're developing in their stomachs.

It's good to be realistic, but it's better to be optimistic than pessimistic. When we look at life's events with optimism, we have something to smile and be joyful about, and that is the power of positive living.

Positive living has been documented to improve the quality of lives of even terminal cancer patients. Some doctors even promote laugh therapy for these patients.

Robert Schuller, author of "Tough Times Never Last, Tough People Do!," is an optimism guru and he gives the following thought suggestions that will help us look at potentially stressful problems and events in a proper perspective:

Everyone has problems

"Every living human being has problems. Perhaps you are unhappy with your work. Isn't it good that you have a job rather than being unemployed? Many people have the mistaken notion that successful people do not have any problems. It is not true. Success tends to breed its own set of problems.

"Accept the fact that everyone has problems. This will help you move on with your life rather than sitting and feeling pity for yourself.

ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

"Every problem has a limited life span. Life has its ups and downs. No one is up all the time or down all the time. Problems get resolved in the long term. They don't last forever.

"Every problem holds positive possibilities. There are two sides to every coin. What may be a problem for one could be an interesting opportunity for someone else. Hospitals are there because people get sick; garages are there because cars break down; lawyers are there because people get into trouble with the law occasionally.

Problems change you

"Every problem will change you. When we meet problems head-on in life, they leave their indelible mark on us. The experience could make you better or worse. It is up to you. What is certain is that problems never leave us the same way they found us.

"For example, let us say that you lost your job. You can sit and feel sorry for yourself. Or you can be aggressive and decide to do something about it. You want to show them what a mistake they did in firing you. That may be the wake-up call you needed before embarking on a successful mission. For every problem, there is a positive and negative side. Look for the positive side and work on it.

"You can choose what your problem will do to you. You may not be able to control the problems, but you certainly can control your reaction or response to the problem. You can turn your pain into profanity or into poetry. (A problem) can make you tough or tender. It can make you better or bitter.

"There is a negative and a positive reaction to every problem. Tough people have learned to choose the most positive reaction in managing problems.

Optimists, pessimists

"Positive people chose to react positively to their predicament. Optimistic people are... more relaxed, healthier and more productive at work. Pessimists are... a bundle of nerves. They curse at the slightest provocation. They lose sleep and hair over trivial matters. This negatively affects their work and their overall performance.

"We should always catch ourselves when we fall into the negative thinking rut, and quickly pull ourselves out of it. Negative thoughts may subsequently lead to many illnesses. Psychological problems may arise such as anxiety, depression, inferiority complex, uncontrollable anger; or physical ailments such as ulcers, high blood pressure, diabetes and even cancer.

"What we think and feel, we become. Negative thinkers and those who have the so-called type-A personality have been shown to have more medical problems than those with a positive outlook in life.

"Some people strive at perfection with the wrong notion that excellence means perfection. This 'all-or-nothing' or '100 percent-or-bust' mentality extolled in many supposedly inspirational, career-advancement books can only cause havoc to one's nerves. We should allow yourself to fail every now and then. After all, it's all part of being human."

B5: The ultimate hair vitamin

IT IS IRONIC that the more beauty treatments your hair is subjected to, the worse it ends up looking and the harder it becomes to manage.

Filipino women, in particular, are known to devote so much attention to their hair, but instead of making it more attractive, they unwittingly become responsible for hair damage or problems like excessive fallout.

Hair, after all, is a complicated fiber which does not tolerate excessive abuse very well.

According to the Procter & Gamble Kobe Technical Center in Japan, given the rate at which hair grows (one cm per month), this is what shoulder-length hair of about 30 cm could have undergone: around 1,000 washes and blow-dries, more than 5,500 hours of sun exposure, thousands of times styled, brushed or retouched, and maybe about 23 applications of hair colorant.

Under such ravaging conditions, the most beautiful mane can turn weak, damaged and eventually break off without proper daily nourishment and damage protection. It can be disconcerting to constantly lose hair strands even while sleeping, taking a shower, combing or blow-drying, or doing something as natural as running your hand through your hair.

Before it sends you into a panic attack, note that medical experts say losing 50 to 100 hair strands a day may still be regarded as normal. When you exceed that range, a hair and nutrition check are in order. Hair fallout tends to be greater if the force applied to it is more severe and constant. Hair fallout conditions vary, though. Hair is considered more susceptible to damage, for instance, when it is wet.

Unabated hair fallout may be a signal of deficiency in one of the critical nourishers needed by our hair, vitamin B5. When hair lacks vitamin B5, it may become weak at the core. That weakness is what causes brittleness, breakage and fallout.

To stay in its best appearance and optimal health, heir needs to be strengthened with essential nutrients and vitamins. The right vitamins can spell the difference to nourish your once-glorious mane back to life. Foods rich in proteins and B vitamins, which are well-known for fortifying the body's defenses against illnesses, are also good for the hair and scalp.

Vitamin B5 is particularly vital to helping hair withstand day-to-day pressures and keep it flexible, strong and beautiful.

The mighty nutrient

With vitamin B5, you can help keep your hair out of the danger zone.

Hair experts also point out that the hair and scalp's nutritional needs change with the passage of time. One of the best preventive measures for hair care problems like broken hair and fallout is the right choice of innovative hair care products with natural ingredients or formulated with the B5 nutrient to restore lost moisture and regain hair health and luster.

Pantothenic acid, sometimes called Panthenol or Vitamin B5, is part of the B-complex group, and is present in all living cells. Pantothenic Acid helps stimulate the adrenal glands, and may help protect against mental and physical stresses and toxins.

Pantothenic acid is important to healthy hair. As a recognized growth stimulant, the vitamin helps the body metabolize protein, which is the major component of hair. Although taking extra pantothenic acid has not been proven to promote faster or more abundant hair growth, a deficiency can lead to fallout as well as premature graying.

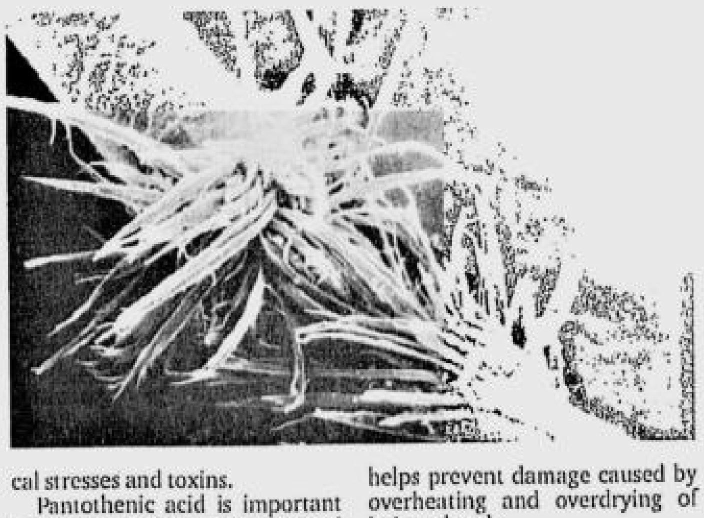
Pantothenic acid is a common ingredient in topical hair and skin care preparations. It enhances the strength of hair, increasing the resistance to breakage. It helps prevent damage caused by overheating and overdrying of hair and scalp.

It also nourishes hair by replenishing and augmenting the vitamin level in the hair, imparting long-lasting moisturization.

Pro-Vitamin B5 or Panthenol, the derivative of Vitamin B5, is commonly used in hair care products for its ability to both hold and attract water. When used topically in shampoos, hair sprays and hair styling aids, panthenol increases the water content of the hair shaft, which leads to increased elasticity.

Panthenol can actually penetrate the hair shaft through voids where the cuticle has been damaged. As such, it works well in products that need to be rinsed off. As a result, the hair has more manageability, better shine, less static electricity, and improved softness. Simply stated, Pro-Vitamin B5 penetrates the hair, rejuvenating hair follicles and nourishing it from within.

Say goodbye to hair fallout and bad hair days, with help from the ultimate hair vitamin. Strengthen your hair every day with Vitamin B5.



KEEP HAIR OUT OF DANGER ZONE

Lack of daily nourishment and improper hair care like rough combing and brushing, frequent chemical treatments like perming or coloring, and styles which pull hair tightly using clips or bands lead to weak, damaged hair and higher than normal hair fall. By strengthening your hair every day with Vitamin B5, you strengthen the hair shaft, resulting to less breakage.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given of estate of the late ALVIN A. PAPA was extrajudicially settled w/sale by the heirs as per Doc456 Page92 BookXIII Series 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Jose L. Magsanoc of Marikina City.
PDI-March 6,13&20, 2004

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late SOCORRO T. JAMILI has been extrajudicially settled with deed of absolute sale among her heirs before Notary Public Joaquin L. Delos Santos as per Doc. No. 335, Page No. 71, Book No. VII, Series of 2004.
(PDI-Feb 28, Mar 6 & 13, 2004)

Notice is given that the estate of the late Spouses Eduardo Alo Sy Aka Yuchin and Mercedes Cimafranca was extrajudicially settled by their heirs on August 3, 2001 per Doc. No. 467 Page No 95 Book I Series 2001 before Atty Renelda F Chanco of Cebu City.
(PDI - March 6, 13 & 20, 2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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NOTICE OF CANCELLATION
UPON Deed of Cancellation made and entered into this February 19, 2004 by KABUL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION and MAXIMA E. RAMIREZ to cancel the Land Purchase Agreement dated November 21, 1976 over Lot No 9 Block No 4 of Pecsonville Subdivision, Tungkong Mangga, San Jose del Monte City. As acknowledged by Notary Public Atty Cesar Turiano Doc. No. 347, Page No. 71, Book No. I, Series of 2004. Notice to the interested parties and to the public is hereby served pursuant to its rights granted by R.A. 6552.
Quezon City, Philippines February 26, 2004
(PDI - Mar. 6, 2004)

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PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You, no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your Perpetual Glory. Amen

KING FAISAL SPECIALIST HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH CENTRE
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

KING FAISAL SPECIALIST HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH CENTER REPRESENTATIVES ARE HERE ON MONDAY, MARCH 08, 2004 TO INTERVIEW/SELECT/RECRUIT FOR THE FOLLOWING URGENTLY NEEDED POSITIONS:

ARCHITECTS, STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS, ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS, MECHANICAL ENGINEERS, AND COMPUTER GRAPHICS AND ANIMATION SPECIALIST.

Candidates should be graduates (BS, MS) design architects, structural, electrical, mechanical engineers. Must have a minimum of eight (8) years experience for such systems in healthcare facilities; jobs related Planning/Design/ Construction experience with consulting engineering/ engineering companies. Working with **auto-cad, MS projects, Primavera computer tools, is a requirement.**

QUALIFIED CANDIDATES must PERSONALLY register and submit detailed resumé with job descriptions, certificates of employment/training, photo copy of college diploma, board license/certificate, PRC card and 2 (two) pcs. current 2x2 picture, No Objection Certificate (if ex-Saudi) between 8-4 PM to the:

PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION
MANPOWER REGISTRY DIVISION, WINDOW 1
Ground Floor, Left Wing Lobby
EDSA cor. Ortigas Ave., Mandaluyong City

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: MARCH 8, 2004
INTERVIEW SHALL BE ON MARCH 8, 2004

Arrange chronologically in a cream folder all xerox copies in accordance with the above-mentioned requirements. Bring original documents arranged in similar manner for verification

"Mag-ingat sa mga Illegal Recruiters"

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Zambales
Municipality of Candelaria
Office of the Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

February 23, 2004

The Municipal Government of Candelaria, Zambales will conduct bidding for materials and labor of various Infrastructure Projects to be held at the Office of the BAC Chairman on March 23, 2004 at 3:00 p.m.

A. Items to Bid
  A.1 Various Infrastructure Projects (pls. inquire at the office of the Municipal Engineer/ MPDC, Candelaria, Zambales)
B. Requirements
  B.1 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Business Name Registration or SEC Registration
  B.2 Valid and Current Mayor's Permit / Municipal License
  B.3 Taxpayers and Identification Number (TIN)
  B.4 Statement of the Prospective Bidder that it is not blacklisted or barred from bidding by the government, or any of its agencies or instrumentalities, including non-inclusion in the consolidated blacklisting report issued by the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) once released in accordance with the guidelines to be issued by the GPPB as provided in Section 69.4 of IRR-A or R.A. 9184.
  B.5 Statement of the Prospective Bidder of all its ongoing and completed government and private contracts awarded but not yet started if any.
  B.6 For Infrastructure Projects:
  – a valid PCAB License.
  B.7 Audited Financial Statement stamped "received" by the BIR for the last two (2) years.
  B.8 Business or individual Income Tax Return for the past (2) two years.
  B.9 Deadline for the submission of necessary documents shall be on March 16, 2004.

***** PLEASE BRING LATEST AND ORIGINAL DOCUMENT FOR VERIFICATION *****

C. Funding Source – Second Congressional District PDAF
D. The LGU of Candelaria, Zambales reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects in them, and award to bidder whose bid is most advantageous to the government.

For particular, you may contact ENGR. EDWIN E. EBDANE, BAC Member, Municipal Planning and Development Office at Cell # 09263267881 / 09275177127.

(Sgd.) **EDILBERTO H. COLLADO**
MBO / BAC Chairman

(PDI – March 6 & 13, 2004)

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- Good oral & written communication skills

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(NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL)
Villamor Interchange, South Superhighway
Makati City, Philippines

NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL
Announcement of Vacant Positions

SECRETARY I (OED-Central Office) – SG-7; Item No. NNCB-SEC1-2-1998; Completion of two years studies in college; Experience not required; Training not required; 1st level CS eligibility.

DRIVER I (AD-Central Office) – SG-3; Item No. NNCB-DRV1-11-1998; Elementary school graduate; No experience required; No training required; professional driver's license.

For further information, please contact Mr. Benjamin C. Formento, Human Resource Management Officer III, Personnel Section, Administrative Division, tel. no. 892-85-75.

(Sgd.) **ELSA M. BAYANI, CESO III**
Executive Director

(PDI–March 6, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Science and Technology
National Computer Center– Field Operations Office

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Computer Center – Field Operations Office (NCC-FOO) invites interested parties for the provision of various ICT equipment relative to the implementation of its Jumpstarting E-Governance in Local Government Units (eLGU) project for the ff. lots and approved budget:

Lot 1 – Community e-Centers (CeCs) : P17,460,000.00
Lot 2 – NCC-FOO Facilities Augmentation Type A : P5,780,000.00
Lot 3 – NCC-FOO Facilities Augmentation Type B : P6,515,000.00

Interested parties may secure the eligibility requirements and request-for-proposal from the ff. upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,500.00:

Luzon :	Concepcion P. Lasam, NCC-FOO – Luzon, National Computer Center, C.P. Garcia Ave., UP Diliman Campus, Quezon City. Tel. # (02) 9207416
Visayas :	Frederick D. Amores, NCC-FOO – Visayas, DOST 7, Gov. Manuel Cuenco Ave., Banilad, Cebu City, Tel. # (032) 2317024
Mindanao :	Cheryl C. Ortega, NCC-FOO, 2nd Floor, Philippine Veterans Bank Bldg., Gov. Lim Ave., Zamboanga City, Tel. # (062) 9932878

Bid documents will be issued from March 6 to 30, 2004. The pre-bid conference (March 17, 2004) and opening of bids (March 31, 2004) will be conducted at NCC-FOO in Zamboanga City.

NCC reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals without offering any reason whatsoever, to waive any defects therein and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most responsive.

A copy of this invitation is also posted at **http://foo.ncc.gov.ph, http://elgu.ncc.gov.ph, and http://www.procurementservice.net.**

(Sgd.) **CHERYL C. ORTEGA**
Chairperson, BAC

(PDI – March 6 & 15, 2004)

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- With 2 to 5 years working experience in Insurance Industry

CLAIMS PROCESSOR - (Non-Life Insurance)
- Male at least 25 years old
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- With good oral and written communication skills/computer literate
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Or e-mail: cpils_cebu@hotmail.com

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue,
Pasig City, Philippines

Tanggapan ng Pangalawang Kalihim
Office of the Undersecretary

DepED
Telefax 631-95-4[illegible]
Direct Line 633-93-42
Trunk Line 632-13-61 local 2021 [illegible]
E-Mail Address [illegible]@deped.gov.ph
Website [illegible]

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
ADM 04-03-01

The Department of Education is inviting all security agencies to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Security Services of DepEd for 2004. The approved budget for the security services shall be P11,614,860.00.

All interested security agencies may avail of the bidding documents upon submission of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Three Hundred Pesos (P300.00) starting **March 8 - 26, 2004** at the BAC Secretariat Office, Rm. 112-A, Mabini Bldg., DepEd Complex, Pasig City or visit the DepEd Website at *http://www.deped.gov.ph.*

A pre-bid conference will be held on **March 19, 2004**, 10:00 AM at Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal Bldg. I, DepEd Complex, Pasig City. The deadline for the submission and opening of bids shall be on **April 2, 2004** at the same time and place mentioned above.

DepEd-BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive deficiencies embodied therein without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids. DepEd-BAC further reserves the right to declare a failure of bid, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary
Chairman, DepEd-BAC

(PDI – March 6 & 13, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
Third Elementary Education Project
Bids and Awards Committee

Invitation for Bids

March 07, 2004

To All Qualified Bidders:

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) towards the cost of financing the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments for civil works component of the project. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.*

2. The **Division Bids and Awards Committee (DBAC)** invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following projects to wit:

Package No.	Schools	Location	Type of Works	PCAB Category
ZDS-NCB-02-08-041	Bag-ong Pitogo PS	Brgy. Bag-ong Pitogo, Aurora, ZDS	NC-1 unit-1 CL*	Small "B"

* Multi-Grade Type School building

3. Bidding documents may be purchased at Dep Ed Division Office of Zamboanga del Sur with office address at J.S. Alano St., Pagadian City for a nonrefundable fee of Php2,500.00 for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.

4. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security in the amount of 2.5% of total bid price, and shall be delivered to Division's Bids and Awards Committee, Department of Education – Division Office of Zamboanga del Sur, J.S. Alano St., Pagadian City on or before 10:00 A.M./March 24, 2004, at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.

5. For Clarification, a Pre-Bid Conference will be conducted on March 10, 2004 at 2:00 P.M. at the office of the Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Zamboanga del Sur, J. Alano St., Pagadian City.

(Sgd.) **VISMINDA G. SERRATO**
Chairperson
Division Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–March 6, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Telefax Nr 421-2327; 911-6001 Loc 6592
website: www.afp.milph / Email: cosb.j9@afp.mil.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Armed Forces of the Philippines invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid in a Single-Stage bid process for the **Supply and Delivery of Hydrographic Equipment** composed of **Hydrographic Survey Equipment and Data Processing Equipment** of the Philippine Navy with a budget ceiling of **Four Million One Hundred Twenty Eight Thousand Pesos (Php 4,128,000.00)**. Said budget shall be charged against the AFP Modernization Program funds. Specifics of this project are as follows:

LOT 1

ITEM	QTY	ABC
1. GPS, Hydro System (Real Time Kinematics)	1 set	Php 1,130,000.00
2. Echo Sounder	1 unit	578,000.00
3. Tide Gauge	1 unit	785,000.00
4. Total Station	1 unit	350,000.00
	Total	2,843,000.00

LOT 2

ITEM	QTY	ABC
1. Laptop Computers*	2 units	Php 200,000.00
2. Color Scanner*	1 unit	1,000,000.00
3. Desk Top Computer*	1 unit	85,000.00
	Total	1,285,000.00
	GrandTotal	4,128,000.00

**Branded*

Only bids from entities who are authorized dealers/distributors of the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) for this type of hydrographic survey equipment and data processing equipment shall be entertained.

Bid documents shall be available for issuance starting **04 March 2004 until 05 April 2004** during office hours at the BAC Secretariat, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Capability, Materiel and Technology Development, J9, GHQ, AFP, 3rd Floor, Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. The bid documents shall be issued upon payment of a **One Thousand (Php1,000.00)** fee, which is not refundable. The form of payment shall be in cash or cashier's check in favor of the AFP Modernization Act Trust Fund. Pre-registration documents may only be submitted starting on the day of first publication until the day before the pre-bid conference.

A Special Power of Attorney, issued by the prospective bidder authorizing its representative to purchase the bid documents in its behalf, shall be required before issuance of the bid documents.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on **18 March 2004 at 09:00 a.m.** (local time) at the **Silid Panday Pira, 1st Floor, Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Aguinaldo, Quezon City**. Bidders may submit their query/ies, if any, in writing to the BAC Secretariat not later than seven (7) working days prior to the Pre-Bid Conference.

The Bidder shall be allowed to inspect the two (2) PKM gunboats at the ROK Navy Shipyard, Chin Hae Naval Base in Busan, ROK upon purchase of bid documents until the deadline of submission of the bids, and upon prior request from the Camp Commander of Chin Hae Naval Base. All bidders who cannot afford to send an Inspection Team to ROK may get all available data also at J9, GHQ, CGEA.

Deadline for submission of bid envelope is on **06 April 2004 at 9:00 a.m.** (local time) and followed by the Opening of Bids at 10:00 a.m. at the Silid Panday Pira.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any or all bids based on the grounds specified in RA 9184 without assuming any obligation whatsoever for any expenses or losses that may be incurred by the bidder(s) in the preparation of his bid.

(Sgd.) **REYNALDO D RIVERA**
Major General, AFP
Chairman, AFP-BAC

(PDI - March 6 & 12, 2004)

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SATURDAY,
MARCH 6, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OBITUARIES

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LOLITA L. MADALI

Peacefully joined our Creator on March 4, 2004 at the age of 50.

Her bereaved husband Jun; children Junjun, Ian, RJ, and JV; father Miguel; brothers Boy, Jess and Manny; sisters Ola and Dimple; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at their residence 10 V. E. Avenue, Village East Cainta, Felix Avenue, Cainta Rizal (infront of Macro).

Interment will be on Wednesday, March 10, 2004 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, after the 1:30 p.m. Mass at the Holy Trinity Parish

We design **OBITUARIES** for free.

SEVERINA CONCEPCION VERGARA

former MIST teacher
wife of the late BAYANI S. VERGARA

Peacefully joined our Creator on March 5, 2004 at the age of 77.

Her bereaved children **ROY & EVELYN, PAUL & BIBETH, VOLTAIRE & PINKY**; grandchildren **AARON & MITCHIE, HAZEL & ALLAN, RYAN, YNO, KYLE, MICKY, MICAH, OWEN, PAUL JR., BRIAN, PAMELA, PAULA & MINONI**; great grandchildren **ANDRE, RAM**, and other relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at PAKET SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES, San Roque, Marikina City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, March 9, 2004 at the LOYOLA MEMORIAL PARK, Marikina after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at OLA Church.

COL. GERONIMO A. DANGO

President,
MAGICLIP PRODUCTS PHILIPPINES, INC.

Founder & Past President, Entrepreneurs Society of the Philippines
Past Nat'l. Vice-President, Filipino Inventors Society of the Philippines
Balik-Scientist from U.S.A.
A Multi-Awarded Inventor

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 4, 2004.

His bereaved wife, **NATY MOTA DANGO**; children **GERALDINE** and **MARIE**, sister **Eugenia**; sisters and brothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills.

Interment will be on Sunday, March 7, at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque, after the 2:00 P.M. mass at the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills.

> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."** John 3:16

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CLASSIFIEDS

Trans Co
NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION
South Luzon Operation & Maintenance

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

AD NO. TRANSCO 2004-003A

The National Transmission Corporation, South Luzon O&M Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) wishes to invite interested parties who are qualified to apply for eligibility and to bid on the items listed below:

DATE OF BIDDING : MARCH 30, 2004; 10:00 AM

SCHEDULE		ITEM DESCRIPTION	PR NUMBER	APPROVED BUDGET
A1	34 SETS	SUPPLY AND INSTALL WALL/FLOOR MOUNTED SPLIT TYPE AIRCONDITIONING UNIT	3ADM04-0051	P 1,999,000.00
A2	1 LOT	FURNISH & INSTALL 500 KVA. PAD MOUNTED OUTDOOR DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMER	3ADM04-0059	560,000.00
A3	1 LOT	FURNISH AND INSTALL, FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM/FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM	3ADM04-0068	550,000.00

NOTE : A Pre-Bidding Conference will be held on March 16, 2004; 10:00 AM at the Conference Room (Office of the AVP) for Schedule A1-A3.

Complete sets of Application Form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Office of the Manager, Administration Division, SLO&M, San Vicente, Biñan, Laguna, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00 per schedule starting March 08, 2004. No bid documents will be issued on the date of bidding.

Bids will be received at the Conference Room (OAVP), Transco-SL O&M, San Vicente, Biñan, Laguna until the specified date and time of bidding above after which said bids will be opened in the presence of attending bidders.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. The procurement rules and regulations used in this transaction shall be in accordance with the implementing rules and regulations of "R.A. 9184."

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to at least 1% of the approved budget in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Certified Check, Bank Draft, Irrevocable Letter of Credit, or 1.5% of the approved budget in the form of Bank Guarantee, or 2.5% of the approved budget in the form of Surety Bond, penal and callable on demand issued by GSIS or a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

The Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligations to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

(Sgd.) G.R. LISTANO
CHAIRMAN-BAC
SL O & M

(PDI - March 6, 2004)

MORE CLASSIFIEDS ON PAGE B2

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Masbate
City of Masbate

Loan Agreement # PH-P200

INVITATION TO BID

The Republic of the Philippines, through the Department of Education, has received an Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in the amount of P1,749 million (Y7,210 million) towards the financing of the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP) dated December 28, 1999. It is intended that part of the proceeds on this loan will be applied to eligible payments for the new construction and/or repair of different school buildings located at **MASBATE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL (MNCHS), MASBATE CITY MASBATE**. Disbursement of the ODA loan by JBIC will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of the Loan agreement, including the disbursement procedures and the "Guidelines for Procurement under "JBIC ODA Loans." No party other than the Department of Education shall derive any rights from the Loan Agreement or have any claims to loan proceeds. The above Loan Agreement will cover only a part of the project cost. As for the remaining portion, the agency will take appropriate measures for finance.

JBIC requires that bidders and contractors, as well as DepEd-SEDIP under contracts funded with JBIC ODA loans and other Japanese ODA, observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of such contracts. In pursuance of this policy, JBIC: 1. will reject a proposal for award if it determines that the bidder recommended for award has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for the contract in question; 2. will recognize a contractor as ineligible, for a stated period of time, to be awarded a contract funded with JBIC ODA loans if it, at any time, determines that the contractor has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for, or in executing, another contract financed by JBIC ODA loans or other Japanese ODA.

Bidding is open to Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) registered contractors or joint venture contractors with PCAB license category **A** with classification **Medium**. General Building. The approved budget will be announced during the Pre-bid conference.

Bidders may obtain further information and acquire the bidding documents from:

The Bids and Awards Committee
City of Masbate
Tel. No.: **333-5954**
Telefax No.: **333-5035**

A complete set of bidding documents may be purchase by interested eligible bidders starting **March 09, 2004** until **5:00 P.M.** of **March 22, 2004** upon submission of a letter of intent to the above office and payment of a non-refundable of **Three Thousand (P3,000.00) Pesos**.

Pre-bid conference shall be conducted on **March 23, 2004** at **2:00 P.M** to be held at the **Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor, City of Masbate**

Submission of bid together with all the documents required in the bid documents must be delivered to the aforesaid venue on **March 30, 2004** at **10:00 A.M.** at the **Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor, City of Masbate**. All bids will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of the bidders or their legally authorized representatives.

(Sgd.) BERNARDITA S. DALANON
City General Services Officer
BAC Chairman

(PDI - March 6, 11 & 18, 2004)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : March 24 and 25, 2004, 2:00 PM
The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following junk and unserviceable items:

SCHEDULE – I. March 24, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solarium Multi-Purpose Room, Bldg.-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, Quezon City

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of aluminum claddings, radiators corroded drums and GI sheets, pipes motors, post and suspension insulators steel beams, fire extinguishers steel plates copper wires, and other junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Waste Segregation Area, Plant B, Mak-Ban GPP Bo. Brtn, Bay, Laguna	P 1,645,000.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot of assorted cables consisting of co-axial, telephone, power and control cables located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan	P 1,040,550.00/lot
3.	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of boiler re-heater tubes, air heater elements, steel racks, assorted pipes, control and co-axial cables, copper wires bare, and other scrap/junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Malaya TPP Tank Farm, Pililla, Rizal.	P 1,424,000.00/lot
* 4.	One (1) lot expired AERO Foam, approximately 88 pails and 11 drums of waste/sludge oil located at Navotas Tank Farm, Navotas Fish Port, Navotas Metro Manila	P 7,436.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – II : March 25, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solarium Multi-Purpose Room, Bldg.-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, Quezon City

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of counter weights, stator coil, control corroded drums, GI sheets, pipes, motors, elevator parts, steel beams, insulators, used tires, angle bars, steel flat-forms, steel plates copper wires, control panels, circuit breaker mechanism boxes, valves, station batteries oil tanks, air condition equipment, marshalling boxes, and other junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Kalayaan CBK Office and Caliraya HEPP, Laguna	P 1,302,400.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot of assorted pipes and junk items located at Bataan Thermal Power Plant (Bataan TPP), Limay, Bataan	P 500,000.00/lot
3.	One (1) lot unserviceable power cables (9 reels) and (2 reels) wire ropes, located at the cordoned off area of the Kalayaan Warehouse, Laguna.	P 1,224,000.00/lot
* 4.	One (1) lot used transformer oil, "PCB Free," 150 drums, located at Caliraya HEPP, Caliraya, Laguna (drums not included)	P 277,500.00/lot
5.	One (1) lot scrap and junk items located at Lubang Diesel Power Plant Lubang Island, Occidental Mindoro	P 695,000.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2002 ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY OF THE BIDDER OR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for the said bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from S.V. Lamuntad, Jr. at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no. 924-5384. Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM March 23, 2004 for Sch-I, March 24, 2004 for Sch-II.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI - March 4, 5 & 6, 2004)

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Scrapping of excise tax on petroleum urged

By Abigail L. Ho

RESEARCH firm Ibon Foundation called on the government to junk a law slapping excise taxes on petroleum products, saying this was just adding to the burden of the already heavily-laden consumers.

Ibon executive director Rosario Guzman said in a statement that Republic Act 8184, or the Excise Tax on Petroleum Products Act, allowed the government to collect as much as P29.9 million in taxes on diesel alone daily.

She said this was no laughing matter as most diesel users were in the public transport sector, most of which hardly earned anything after paying for high-priced diesel and spare parts.

"The excise tax is a double burden for consumers who have yet to recover from the recent spate of oil price hikes, especially those in the public transport sector," she said.

Under the RA, the government can collect an excise tax of P1.63 per liter of diesel.

As of September 2003, diesel consumption was at 115.4 thousand barrels per calendar day (MBCD), which represented 36 percent of total domestic petroleum consumption at 316.7 MBCD.

Guzman said the government was collecting at least P101.4 million in excise taxes on all oil products daily. While 36 percent of consumption was accounted for by diesel, 56 percent of the excise taxes came from unleaded gasoline, which was taxed at P4.35 per liter.

"RA 8184 is not reasonable because it arbitrarily imposes taxes on consumers, whether rich or poor," she said.

She reasoned that the public transport sector was the biggest consumer of diesel. Members of this sector, while hardly earning anything, still carried the burden of the P1.63-per-liter excise tax on diesel.

In view of pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, she expressed apprehension that, instead of easing the burden of the consumers, the government might even slap higher taxes on petroleum products.

She said the oil industry was a "buoyant sector" that the two international funders would like the government to impose higher taxes on.

In the meantime, the Consumer and Oil Price Watch urged Malacañang to pass an executive order that would bring down duties on crude imports, particularly those used by local refiners to produce diesel.

But the lower duties, COPW chair Raul Concepcion said in a separate statement, should only apply to crude imports used for diesel being sold to the public transport sector.

He said the amount of government subsidy in the form of lower duties could be determined by computing how much diesel local refiners were selling to the public transport sector on a monthly basis.

Thrift banks' NPLs down

THE NON-PERFORMING loans of the country's thrift banks dropped to 12.03 percent of total loans as of end-December from 12.45 percent in November.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that the sector's total NPLs declined by 3.8 percent to P19 billion from P19.75 billion.

At the same time, the sector's NPL ratio net of inter-bank loans narrowed down to 12.50 percent from last month's 12.98 percent.

The non-performing assets likewise dropped to 15.72 percent during the same period from 16.01 percent in November, following a slowdown in the level of these NPAs to P44.08 billion from P44.28 billion the previous month.

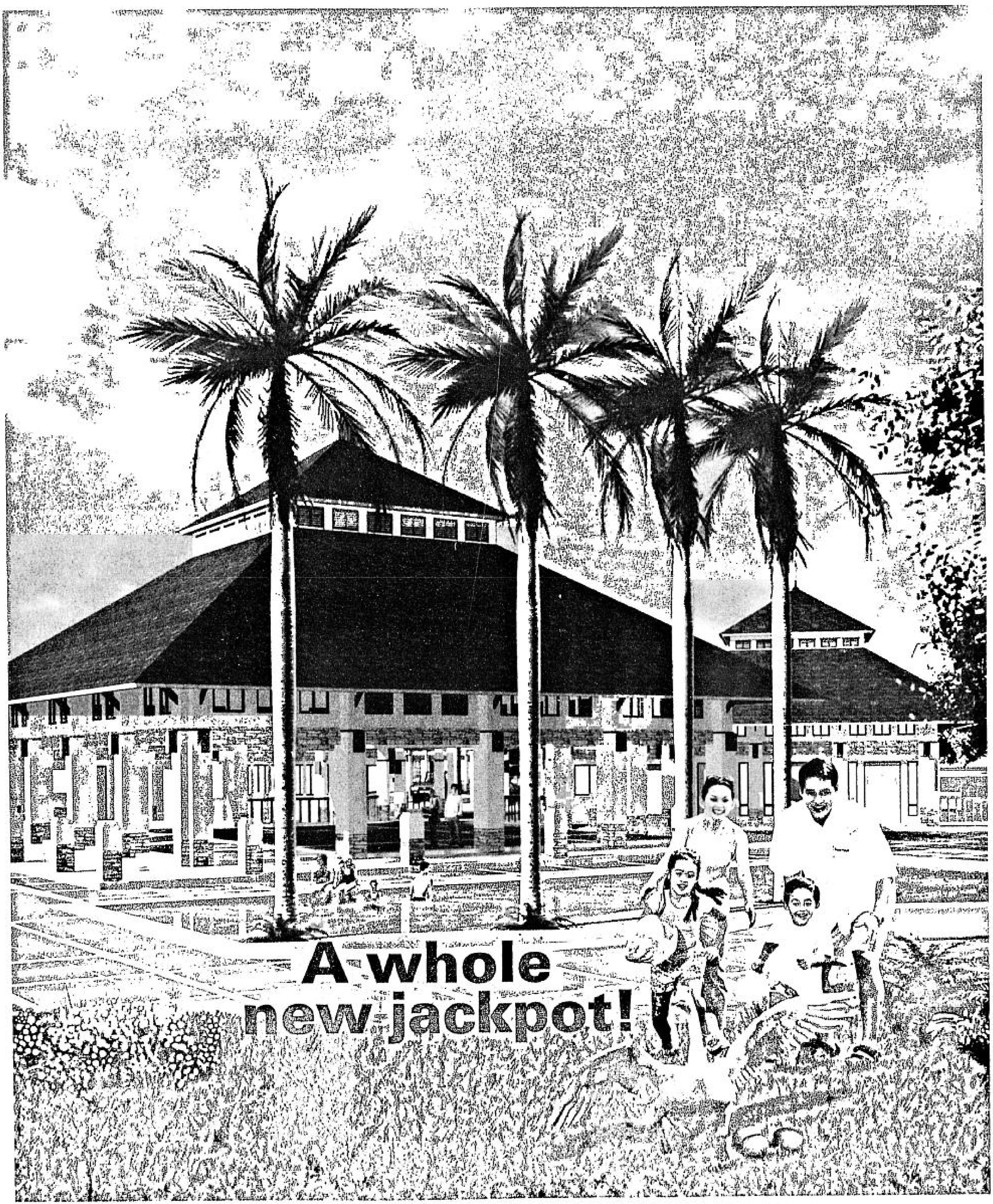
In the same manner, the NPLs of the commercial banking sector in December slowed down by 0.74 percentage point to 14.05 percent, from 14.79 percent of total loan portfolio in November. The NPL ratio also marked an improvement versus the 14.95 percent ratio in the same month last year.

BSP statistics showed that the NPLs of the commercial banking sector in December slowed down by 0.74 percentage point to 14.05 percent from 14.79 percent of total loan portfolio in November. The NPL ratio also marked an improvement versus the 14.95 percent ratio in the same month last year.

But while the banking sector's bad loans are not likely to get any worse, the BSP conceded this early that the industry would fail to meet its 10 percent targeted expansion in loan portfolio for the full year.

"I'm still hoping we'll hit at least 5 percent," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said, noting it was not possible to hit the 10-percent lending growth originally projected by the institution for 2004.

"The first six months is a lost cause," the BSP chief, referring to heightened caution among lenders in view of political uncertainties ahead of the May presidential elections. Doris C. Dumlao



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SATURDAY Special

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JONES. Astonishing record sales.

Norah Jones feels right at home

By Rito P. Asilo

(Conclusion)

IN her new album's noteworthy cut, "Don't Miss You At All," Norah Jones reworks and writes lyrics to Duke Ellington's "Melancholia": "As I sit and watch the snow fallin' down/ I hear children playing, laughin' so loud/ . . .Your dark eyes don't haunt me/ I don't think of your smile/ I don't miss you at all/ And then I wonder who I am/ Without the warm touch of your hand."

Radio-friendly

However, she falters in the otherwise radio-friendly "What Am I to You": "When you're feeling low/ To whom else do you go?/ I'd cry if you hurt/ I'd give you my last shirt/ Because I love you so." Huh?

Norah's debut album may have had a familiar song in Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You," but "Feels Like Home" successfully looks beyond popular standards for inspiration. She covers Tom Waits' "The Long Way Home," which features a delicious fusion of air and string instruments.

Another rollicking number, "Creepin'," is Jones' duet with country superstar Dolly Parton, with her characteristic tremolo that surprisingly blends well with Norah's smoky vocals.

Other top picks: "In The Morning" "Toes," "The Prettiest Thing" and "Carousel Town," which boasts of a charming, wonderfully arranged vocal harmony.

The album is characterized by lyrical conundrums that are made more intriguing and haunting by the 24-year-old musical ingenue's sultry vocals. Yes, the pleasing albeit sometimes narcosis-inducing songs grow on you.

In "Feels Like Home," Jones easily dodges the sophomore slump, and retains her stylishly restrained, elegantly unobtrusive sound, while successfully mixing genres (jazz, country, soul, bluegrass, R&B) that don't usually blend well.

Eclectic mix

Apparently, the appeal of the album's eclectic mix of genres has also translated in astonishing record sales. Two weeks ago, "Feels Like Home" debuted on Billboard's album chart at number one, selling more than a million copies. Not since "The Eminem Show" debuted in June 2002 has an artist opened with seven-digit sales. 50 Cent's "Get Rich or Die Tryin'," 2003's biggest album, debuted with *only* 800,000 copies.

Last year, when CNN asked Norah Jones what her popular debut album was about, she responded: "My songs are about whatever you want them to be. They might mean something completely different to you than what they signify to me."

For music lovers not familiar with the unassuming, lush-voiced Blue Note singer, her answer may sound patronizing. But after listening to the lyrics of the songs in her exquisitely produced follow-up, you'd realize that the statement was right on target.

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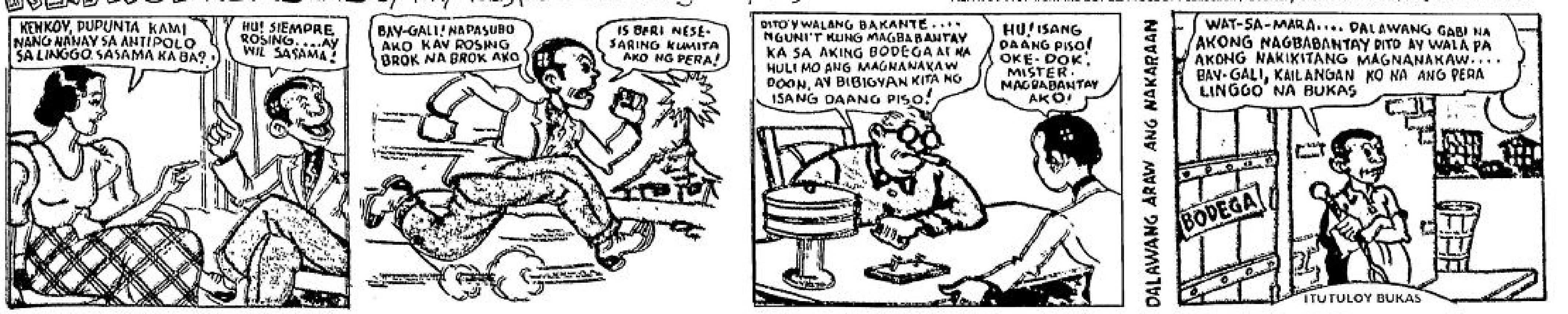
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DITO'Y WALANG BAKANTE.... NGUNI'T KUNG MAGBABANTAY KA SA AKING BODEGA AT NA HULI MO ANG MAGNANAKAW DOON, AY BIBIGYAN KITA NG ISANG DAANG PISO!
HU! ISANG DAANG PISO! OKE-DOK! MISTER. MAGBABANTAY AKO!
DALAWANG ARAW ANG NAKARAAN
WAT-SA-MARA.... DALAWANG GABI NA AKONG NAGBABANTAY DITO AY WALA PA AKONG NAKIKITANG MAGNANAKAW.... BAY-GALI, KAILANGAN KO NA ANG PERA LINGGO NA BUKAS
BODEGA
ITUTULOY BUKAS

YOUR WEEKLY TV GUIDE FROM MARCH 6 - MARCH 11

CH	2	4	5	7	9	13	23	25	29
	6:00 Star in A Million 6:30 Magandang Gabi, Bayan 8:30 Home Along da Airport 9:00 Victim 9:30 Buttercup 10:30 Kontrobersyal 11:30 "F" 12:00 Sports Unlimited	6:00 Concert at the Park 7:00 Yan Ang Pinoy 8:00 Search for the 1st Tanduay Billiards Player	5:30 PBA Games 9.00 Sing Galing 10.00 Lente 11:00 Musical Specials *3 Doors Down Metropolis*	6:00 Search for a Star 7.00 Imbestigador 8:00 Idol Ko Si Kap 9:30 Kakabakaba Adventures 10:30 Celebrity Turns 11:30 Flash Report 12:00 Master Showman	6:00 Isumbong Mo Kay Tulfo 7.00 7 Days 8:00 John Doe 9:00 Saturday Night Playhouse 11:00 PGMA	6:00 Opinyon at Desisyon 7:00 Bitag 7:30 9-Ball Tirador 9.00 Nina 10:00 String og Hearts 11:00 Iyo ang Katarungan	6:00 Baywatch 7:00 Game Plan 7:30 The Amazing Race 8:30 Boston Public 9:30 Studio 23 Presents 11:30 Reel Deal	6:00 Agila Reports 6:30 Screen Savers 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Car Guys 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:00 RJ Music Videos 9:00 Music Videos 10:00 Music Videos 11:00 Music Videos
	5:30 Sharon 7:00 Wansapanataym 8:30 Tanging Ina 9:30 24 10:00 Sunday Family Cinema 11:30 Dong Puno Tonight 12:00 The Weekend News	6:00 Asian Boxing Championship 9:00 Go For Gold 11.00 Unlimited Diving	5:30 PBA Games 9:00 Viva Cine Idols *Bihb Ako Sa 'Yo* 11:00 Speed	5:30 Partners Mel & Jay 7:00 K! 8:30 Daddy Di Do Du 9:30 Sunday Night Box Office 11:20 Flash Report 11.30 Che-Che Lazaro Presents	6:00 Smack Down Wrestling 7:00 Ripley's Believe It or Not 8:00 May Puso ang Batas 9:00 Sunday's Big Event *Road to the Academy Awards* 11:00 URRC TV	6:00 Home Shopping Network 7:00 Japan Video Topics 10:00 In this Corner 11:00 MTV Filler 11.30 El Shaddai	6:00 Sponge Bob 6:30 Mr. Bean 7:00 Exposed 8:00 Spin City 8:30 Just Shoot Me 9:00 Will & Grace 9:30 The West Wing 10:30 Digital Tour 11:00 Crossing Over with John	6:00 Captured 6:30 Fresh Gear 7:00 Convergence 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 New Yankee Workshop 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Ang Iglesia ni Cristo	6:00 RJ Music Videos 9:00 Music Videos 10:00 Music Videos 11:00 Music Videos
	6:00 TV Patrol 7:00 Star Circle Quest 8:00 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:30 Marina 9:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 9:30 It Might Be You 10:00 OK Fine! Whatever 11:00 Insider 11:30 The Correspondents	6:00 Concert at the Park 7:00 Family Rosary Crusade 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 Family Rosary Crusade	6:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 E R 8:00 Guiness World Records 9:00 Friends 9.30 Misadventures of Maverick and Ariel 10:00 INQ TV 10:15 The Big News 10:45 Mad TV	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Te Amo 8:30 Endless Love II 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita 11:00 Saksi 11.30 I-Witness	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Just for Laffs 8:00 Jag 9:00 The Agency 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Sex & the City 11:00 Atelier	8:00 NBA 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Linawin Natin	6:00 The Chronicle 7:00 Bully 9:00 Charmed 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11.30 Travel Time	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Convergence 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:00 RJ Music Videos 9.00 Music Videos 10:00 Music Videos 11:00 Music Videos
	6:00 TV Patrol 7:00 Star Circle Quest 8:00 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:30 Marina 9:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 9:30 It Might Be You 10:00 Bida Si Mister, Bida Si Misis 11:00 Insider 11:30 Pipol	6:00 Paco Park Presents 7:00 Family Rosary Crusade 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 Wow Philippines 11:00 Auto Focus	6:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 6.30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 Viva Box Office *Pangarap na Ginto* 9:00 Wow Mali 10:00 INQ TV 10:15 The Big News 10:45 Healthline 11:30 Working	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Te Amo 8:30 Endless Love II 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 All Together Now 11:00 Saksi 11:30 I-Witness	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Ed 8.00 Ally McBeal 9:00 Specials 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Sports in Focus 11:00 Global Window	6:00 Game Channel 7:00 DMZ TV 8:00 Global Family Series 9:00 Entrepinoy 9:30 MTV Filler 10:00 Travel 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Up Close and Personal	6:00 The Chronicle 7:00 Batman Animated 7:30 Batman Beyond 8:00 Smallville 9:00 Fast Lane 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Screen Savers Edit A 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:00 RJ Music Videos 9:00 Music Videos 10:00 Music Videos 11:00 Music Videos
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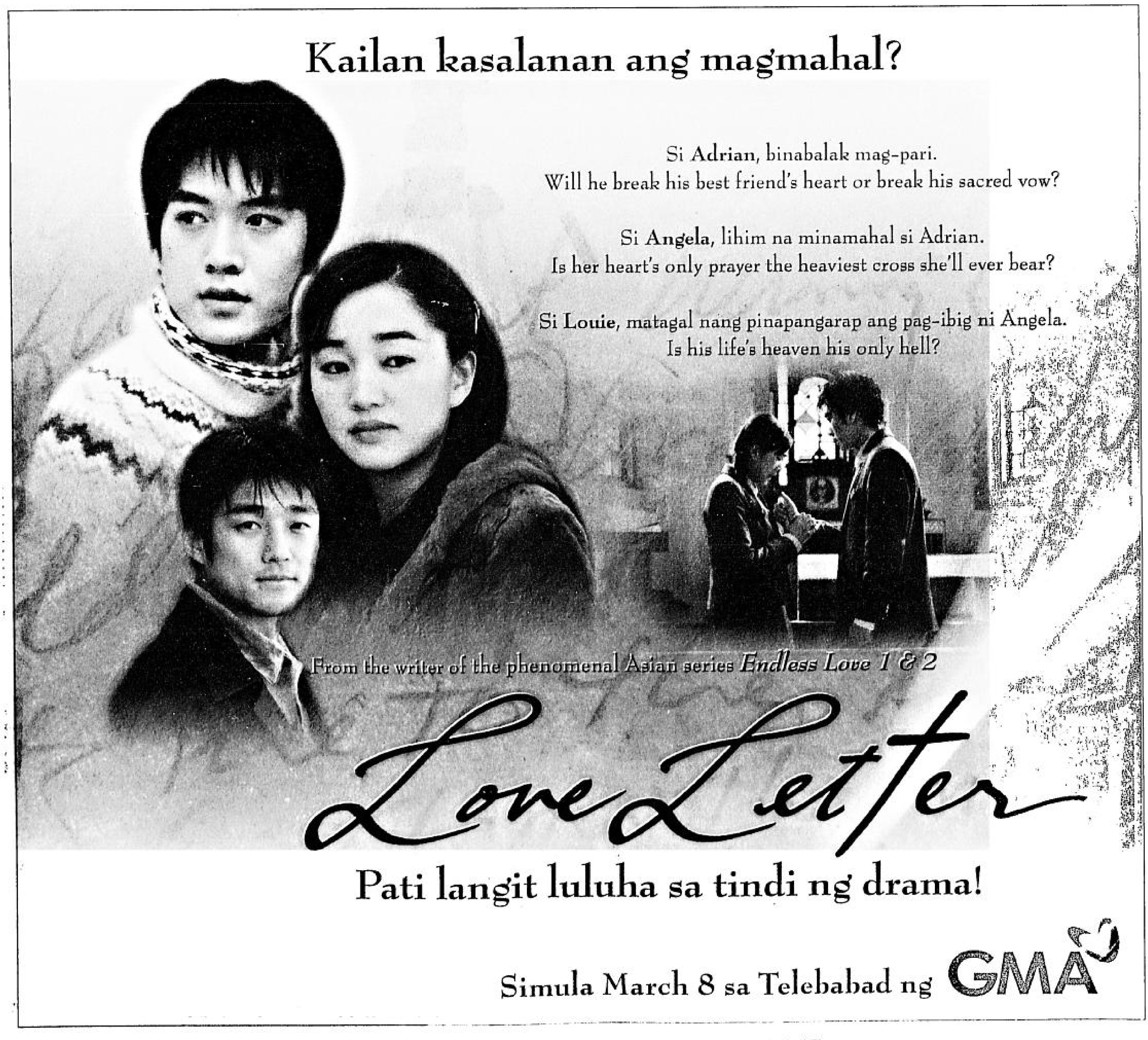
	6:00 TV Patrol 7:00 Star Circle Quest 8:00 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:30 Marina 9:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 9:30 It Might Be You 10:00 Maalaala Mo Kaya 11:00 Insider 11:30 Dong Puno Live	6:00 Phil. Land Admin Docu 6:30 The Workign President 7:00 Ugnayang Pambansa 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10.00 Paco Park Presents 11.00 Unlimited Diving	6:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 PBA Games 9:30 That '70s Show 10:00 INQ TV 10:15 The Big News 10:45 By Request	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Te Amo 8:30 Endless Love II 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 Magpakailanman 11:00 Saksi 11:30 Debate	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Baby Bob 7:30 Sabrina 8:00 Felicity 9:00 Crossing Jordan 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Hidden Hills 11:00 Kasangga Mo'ng Langit	6:00 Game Channel 8:00 NBA 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Opinyon at Desisyon	6:00 The Chronicle 7:00 Mr Bean 7:30 Ang Boyfriend Ko 8:00 Barkada Nights 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Screen Savers Edit B 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:00 RJ Music Videos 9:00 Music Videos 10:00 Music Videos 11:00 Music Videos


Kailan kasalanan ang magmahal?
Si Adrian, binabalak mag-pari.
Will he break his best friend's heart or break his sacred vow?
Si Angela, lihim na minamahal si Adrian.
Is her heart's only prayer the heaviest cross she'll ever bear?
Si Louie, matagal nang pinapangarap ang pag-ibig ni Angela.
Is his life's heaven his only hell?
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Razzies awarded to Affleck, J. Lo and 'Gigli'

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

FROM Twinkle Daguplo: **"After featuring last year's best movies and performances, please write about the underachievers of 2003. There is a website for these movies, right?"**

The Rotten Tomatoes website is one site online to check out "reviews" on bad films. But if you want information about the most notable "underachievers" last year, the Golden Raspbery Award Foundation, hands out trophies called the Razzies, made of handcrafted, gold spray-painted, golf ball-sized raspberries on top of mangled reels of Super 8 film (each with an estimated street value of $4.89) to dishonor excruciatingly bad films and performances.

No surprises

At the Oscars, Peter Jackson's "LOTR: The Return of the King" swept all of its 11 nominations, while the acting trophies were handed to Sean Penn and Tim Robbins ("Mystic River"), Charlize Theron ("Monster") and Renee Zellweger ("Cold Mountain"). No surprises there.

At the annual Razzies, now on its 24th year, there were no surprises, either. Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez' box-office turkey, "Gigli," was "dishonored" with worst actor (Affleck), worst actress (Lopez), worst picture, screenplay and director (Martin Brest) awards.

For "American Idol" fans, the movie to check out is "From Justin to Kelly," which was handed a special prize for "distinguished underachievement" for its choreography (by Travis Payne). Nominated in eight categories, it stars "American Idol" first-season winner Kelly Clarkson and runner-up Justin Guarini, who were both "cited" for their performances.

Worst supporting actress

Another Razzie favorite, two-time winner Demi Moore, won worst supporting actress for her showy but one-dimensional performance in "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle." Her paramour, Ashton Kutcher, was nominated for his performances in "Just Married" and "My Boss' Daughter."

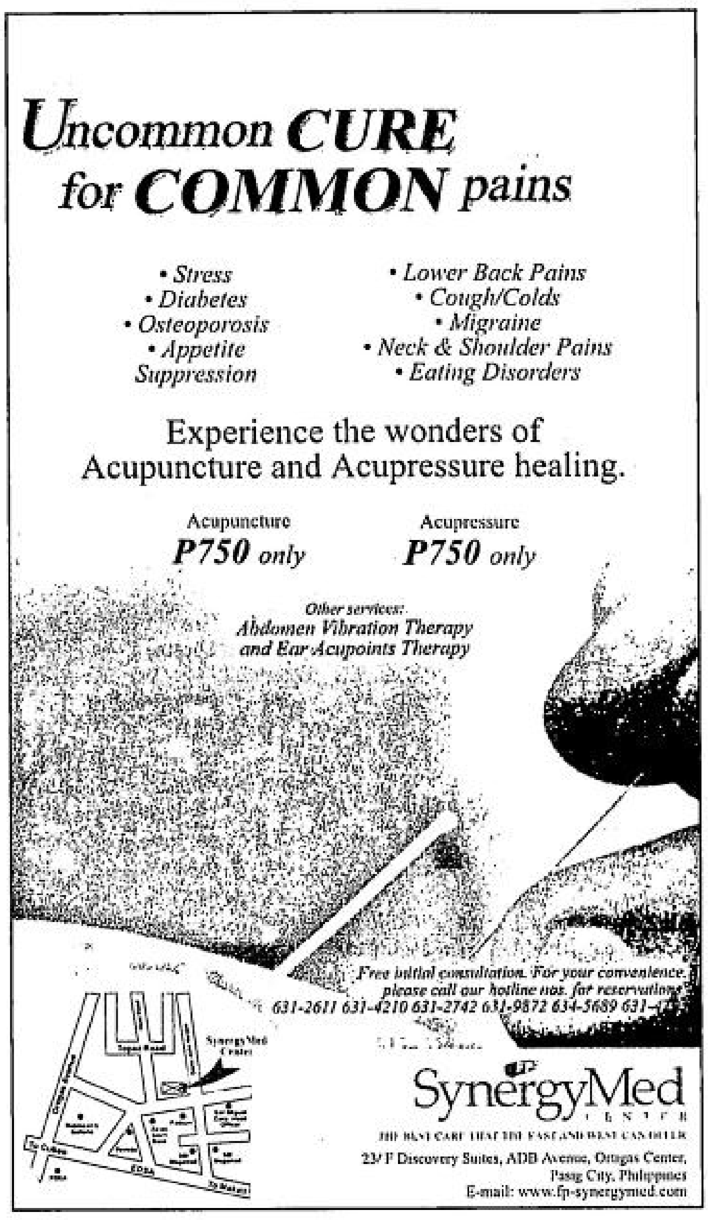
Madonna tied Sylvester Stallone's record of nine wins last year after she copped both worst actress *and* worst supporting actress for "Swept Away" and for her five-minute cameo in the James Bond flick, "Die Another Day." Judy Dench—eat your heart out!

But Stallone is no all-time Razzie winner for nothing. This year, he added another "feather" to his cap by beating fellow nominees Al Pacino ("Gigli") and Kutcher in the supporting actor category for his "impressive" bad-guy turn in "Spy Kids 3D."

As Razzie founder John Wilson noted, "In the movie, Sly played five different characters—none of them well! He can claim he was in a movie that made $100 million, but he's still Sylvester Stallone." Ouch!

Stallone set a new record of his own, a staggering 30 nominations and 10 wins! He and Madonna were "hailed" as the Razzies' worst actor and actress of the century a few years ago.

BEN Affleck, left, and Jennifer Lopez "win" as worst actor and actress, respectively, for their performances in "Gigli."



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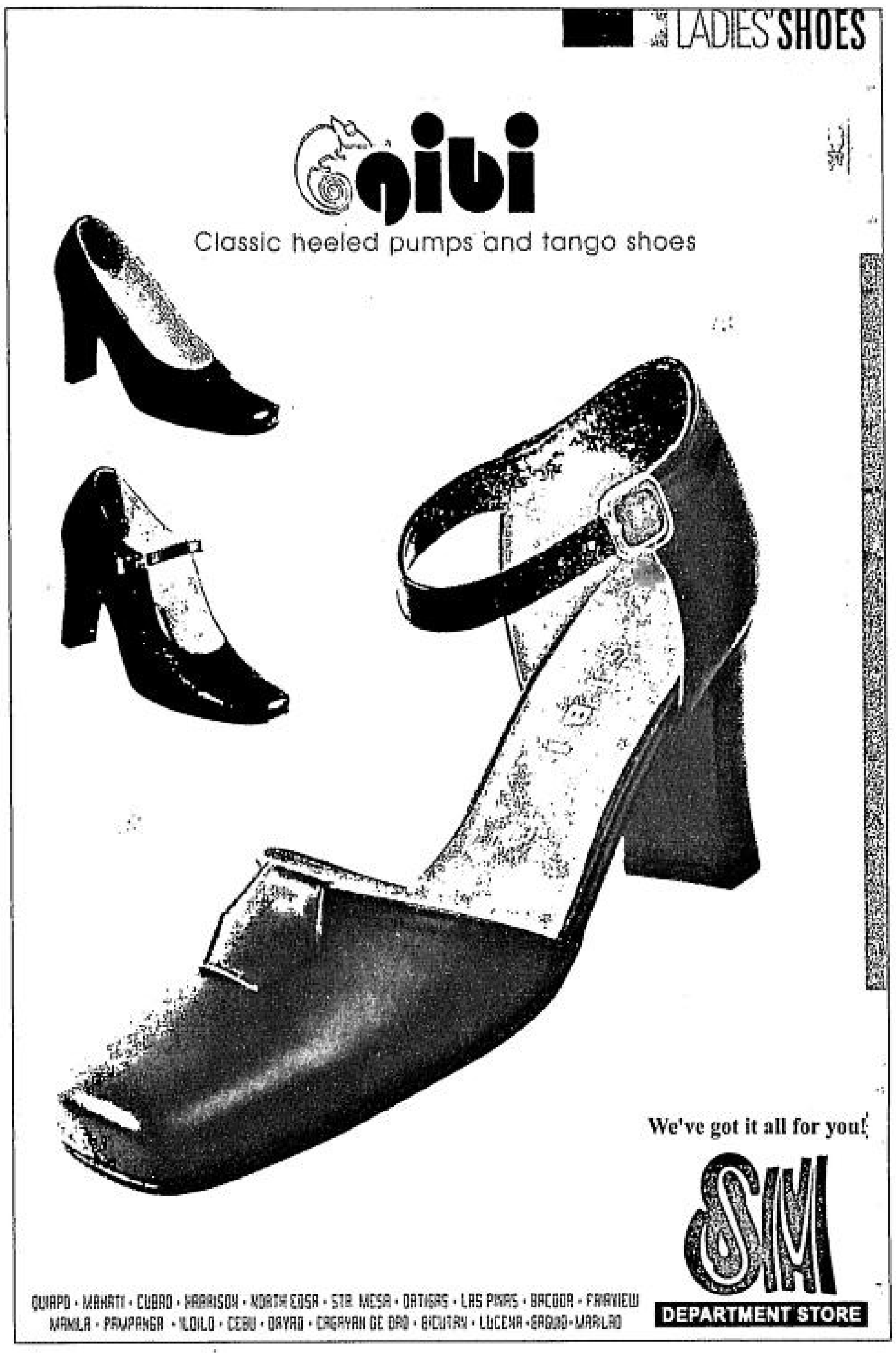

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Hanggang Kailan

SIMULA MARCH 8 SA TELEBABAD NG GMA

Bringing theater to the grassroots

By Nestor U. Torre

NEW playwrights Jeanne Lim, Abigael Malonzo and Rey Manalo are grateful to Manila City Councilor Lou Veloso for supporting their development as writers by making the Sta. Ana Arts Center available for the rehearsals and performances of their one-act plays, "Yes, Mama," "Bisperas" and "Balikbayan Box," respectively.

Busy schedule

Even better, Councilor Veloso cleared his busy schedule so he could be present at one of the three plays' performances recently. Asked to deliver some impromptu opening remarks, Veloso expressed his elation at seeing new playwrights being given the attention and importance they deserved.

He harked back to his own background as a theater artist, which has given him the sensitivity, creativity and "people skills" to respond to and solve the many problems brought to him as an elected city official.

Veloso also enthusiastically participated in the discussions after each play was staged, and contributed comments and insights that helped the writers get a clearer handle on the respective strength and weaknesses of their plays.

Riotous comedy

He was of particular help to Rey Manalo, whose "Balikbayan Box" was a riotous comedy. Being one of our best male comedians himself, Veloso was able to break the play down in detail, to point out finer points related to the antic art of creating comic situations and characters, and making the audience laugh.

Councilor Lou was so heartened by the evening's proceedings that he offered to look for sponsors for a repeat staging this month, so that the new playwrights would have another opportunity to get pointers from the reactions of the audience on how to further improve their scripts.

Veloso's goal is to expand such dynamic cultural activity to include all of the other art forms, not just in Sta. Ana but throughout the city of Manila.

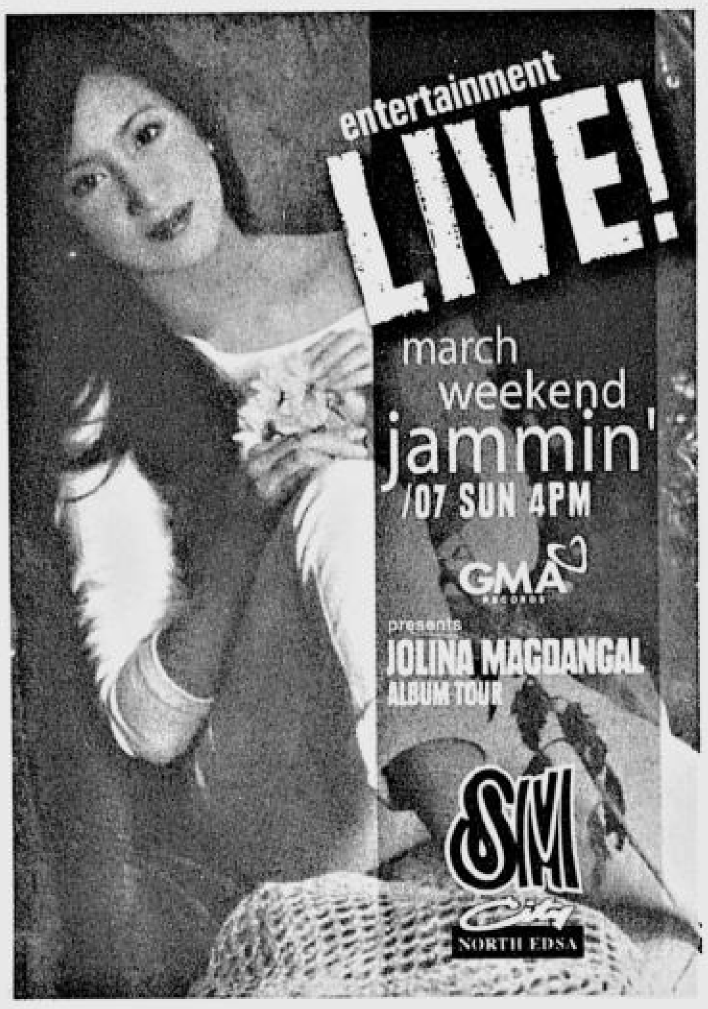
His faith in the transformative and inspirational power of the arts comes from his conviction that culture shouldn't be reserved for the elite, but should be made available to everybody, because the human spirit needs "nutrition" as much as the body.

Passion play

During Holy Week, the councilor himself directs and mounts a passion play that it staged in different parts of Manila's Sixth District. And he has organized workshops in various cultural endeavors that have made Sta. Ana one of the most artistically dynamic parts of the metropolis.

The playwright development initiative at the Sta. Ana Arts Center has been so successful and effective that it could be supported and given wider reach by a respected cultural institution in the coming months. All the more reason, then, for new theater talents to express their gratitude to Councilor Lou for providing the all-important first push and committed backing to help them actualize their best works.

VELOSO, right, directs Richard Signey and other actors in the passion play, "Ang Martir sa Golgotha."



Love's many meanings

(Conclusion)

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

"LOVE is drawing the best out of the worst circumstances. It is giving the other the benefit of the doubt." *—Margie Juico/Director, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office*

"Love is not about you; it is about the other person. It is only when you are willing to sacrifice that you will know the true face of love."*—Arlyn dela Cruz, journalist and anchor/news producer*

"Love is a step toward emotional pain."*—Gabby Barredo, junk artist and sculptor*

"Love is being each other's best friend all the time."*—Margarita Locsin, manager of Lafarge Cement Services Philippines*

"Love is an island of emotions surrounded by an ocean of expenses."*—Pete Cura, president, Corplan*

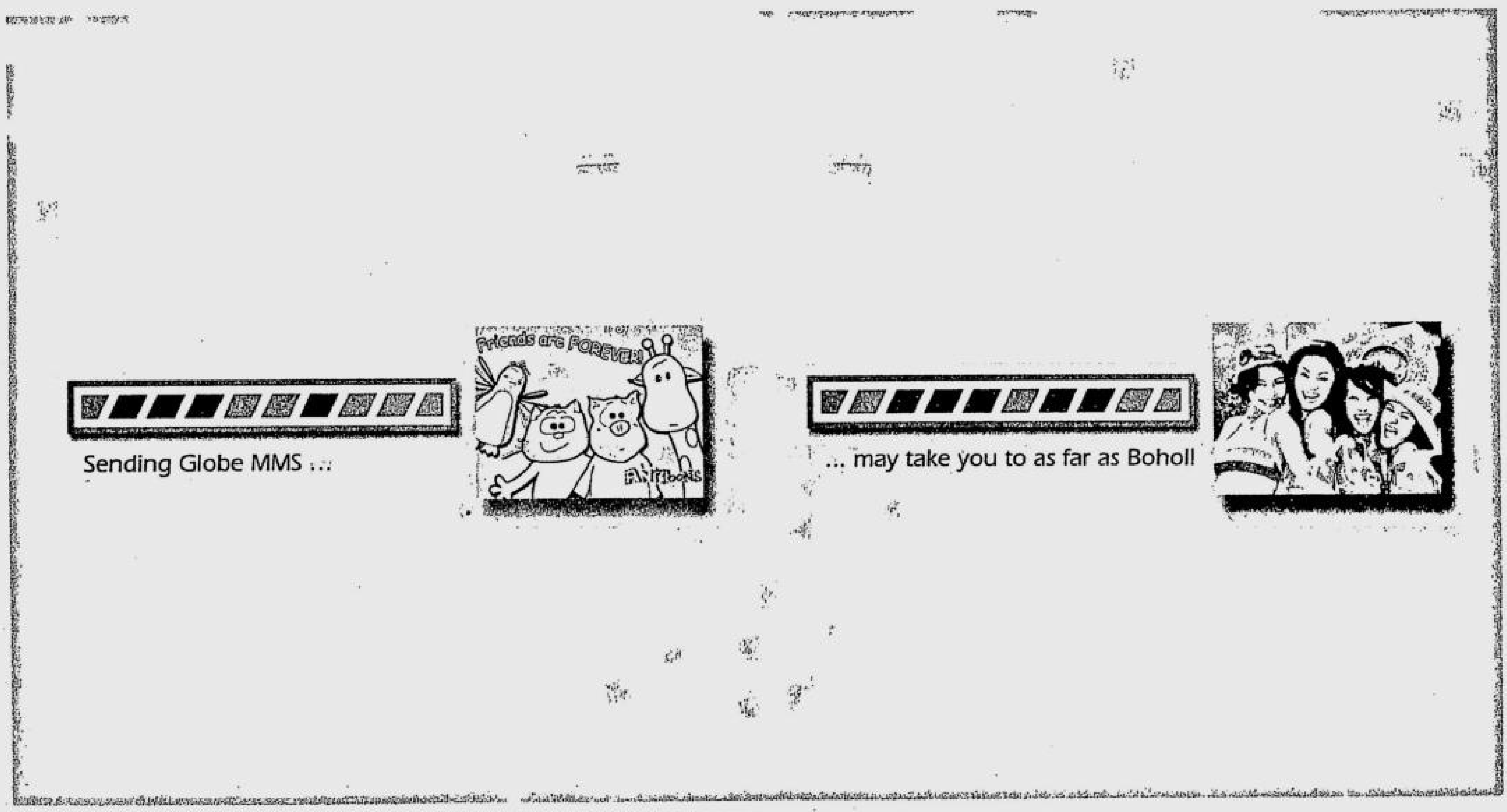
"Love is sharing and giving unconditionally."*—Dr. Aida Mendoza-Salonga, pediatric neurologist, UP-PGH*

"Love is an ardent caring and bonding with another person."*—Eric Torres, poet, writer and art critic*

"I am so in love with my husband, I cannot define love!"*—Annie Campa-Hahn, housewife*

Photoworkshop

The Mandy Navasero Digital Photo Workshop is scheduled on March 6, 13 and 20, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We will discuss tips on good photography and lighting. Call 896-3208 and 899-1767 or email mn_photocom@I-manila.com.ph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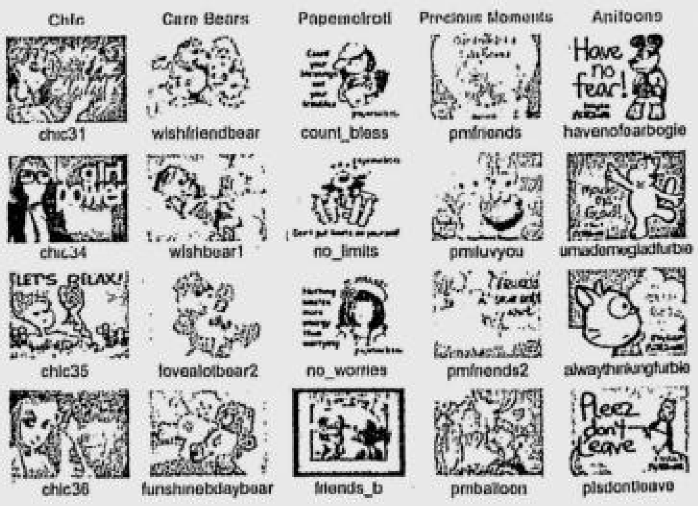

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SATURDAY *Special*

Sofia Coppola emerges from father's shadow

LOS ANGELES—More than 10 years after critics derided her wooden performance in "The Godfather, Part III," Sofia Coppola was feted as Hollywood's darling with a small-budget movie that almost failed to get made at all.

Poignant story

Coppola, 32, won her first Oscar on Sunday for best original screenplay for "Lost in Translation," a poignant story of two Americans isolated and jet-lagged in a Tokyo hotel.

Coppola's Oscar crowned her emergence from the shadow of her famous father, "Godfather" director Francis Ford Coppola, and her cousin, actor Nicolas Cage.

She said that despite having grown up on her father's film sets, she didn't really think about filmmaking for herself until she was in college, when she made a short film.

Before "Lost in Translation," Coppola was best known for her role as Mary Corleone in the third "Godfather" movie in 1990. She stepped in as a replacement for Winona Ryder but her stiff performance in the central role was pilloried by critics, who accused her father of blind nepotism.

First feature film

Coppola's first feature film as a director was the 1999 movie, "The Virgin Suicides," which got good reviews but small audiences.

Coppola spent months trying to persuade Bill Murray to play the lead in "Lost in Translation," faxing him pages of the script as she wrote it and leaving a stream of messages with his agents. Shooting started in Japan before Murray finally agreed to take part. Reuters

COPPOLA. Spent months persuading Bill Murray to play the lead in "Lost in Translation." REUTERS

New Voice Company marks first decade

By Monique Wilson

IN November this year, the New Voice Company will turn 10 years old. After 10 years, NVC has its pool of resident actors, its own Actors Studio in Makati, and a loyal audience that has stood by our choices.

Time to celebrate

Sadly, we still do not enjoy any government support and only a few of our actors work in the theater full time. But hey, we're still alive, kicking and thriving. Indeed, it's time to celebrate!

Establishing New Voice 10 years ago was no easy task. I cannot imagine now how we filled up Music Museum for the seven-hour play that was "Angels In America" in 1995 (now an award-winning HBO special starring Meryl Streep and Al Pacino), or how we got audiences to come to watch plays that dealt with subjects such as incest, homophobia, AIDS and violence against women—with practically no funding from sponsors .

In later years, we lost even more sponsors when we premiered "The Vagina Monologues," before it became a runaway hit that gets more in demand each year.

I remember the first year when all the actresses we asked said no—except for Tami Monsod and Dulce Aristorenas. They have since received one rave review after another. At last year's V-Day event, two years after we opened the play, I had to pinch myself when I saw that there were over a hundred Filipina artists standing together on the AFP stage for the same play.

WILSON. Overriding passion to create provocative theater.

Exciting lineup

This year, we will stage an exciting lineup of shows to help us celebrate our 10 years.

From March 18 to 20, we present, for the fourth consecutive year, our hit production of "The Vagina Monologues" starring Jaya, Jenny Jamora and Tami Monsod, directed by Rito Asilo. On March 27, we will stage our annual V-Day event honoring and celebrating "Filipina Vagina Warriors."

In June, the NVC Actors Studio Productions will premiere an all-female version of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" in Filipino. "Sacrilege"—a play that questions the role of women in the church and why they cannot be priests—runs from Aug. 20 to 28. All four productions will be at the new Republic of Malate theater.

In November, NVC's anniversary month, the company will stage the new Sam Mendes version of "Cabaret," at the Music Museum from Nov. 5 to Dec. 4.

Call 896-6695 or 896-5497.

Gothic atmosphere saves Berry starrer

By Noelani Torre

CRITICS have written off "Gothika" as lurid, illogical, and even ludicrous. Perhaps it is all these, but despite its B-movie characteristics, or maybe because of them, it is quite effective nevertheless.

The movie has no aspirations to art film-hood (even though its director, Mathieu Kassovitz, is a previous Best Director awardee at Cannes). It is unabashedly a popcorn horror movies, and popcorn horror films don't aim to send you home with insights on the human condition; they just want to make you jump off your seats.

BERRY. Compelling and evocative.

Popcorn movie

The reason for most of the film's negative reviews is in the fact that it topbills Halle Berry. If you're an Academy Award-winning actress, what are you doing in a popcorn movie? There are no laws against this, of course, but people are probably wondering why she didn't choose a more substantial movie to be her post-award vehicle.

Not that she didn't give a good performance in "Gothika," mind you. Though she never really pulled out the big acting guns in this one, she was compelling and evocative enough as the wrongfully accused Dr. Miranda Grey to raise the film a few notches above your usual horror flick.

Berry plays a psychiatrist who wakes up to find herself an inmate in the prison where she once worked, accused of having hacked her husband to bits. As she sets out to find the truth—with a lot of gory help from the ghost who possessed her—we find out, not surprisingly, that it was all an act of supernatural revenge.

Fellow inmate

In the movie, Berry is in practically every shot—leaving the rest of the cast, which includes Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz, little to do. Downey plays the condescending Dr. Pete Graham, a friend and colleague, and Cruz is Chloe, a fellow inmate who, when she recounts having sex with the devil, lets loose with one of the movie's cheesiest lines: "He opened me like a flower of pain, and it felt goooood!" Eew.

Still, as we mentioned earlier, despite the suspiciously familiar plot and the stinky lines, "Gothika" is a movie that works. You won't even notice all of these things until after the movie is over and you've pried your fingers off the armrest.

Much of its effectiveness lies in the truly gothic atmosphere that director Kassovitz creates with grim lighting, unexpected camera angles, and dark and stormy nights.

Most viewers would probably be more familiar with Kassovitz's work as an actor. He played the love interest in the international hit, "Amelie," and was the conflicted priest in Constantin Costa-Gravas' powerful "Amen." More serious film lovers, however, know that he is one of the more prolific filmmakers of his generation ("The Crimson Rivers," "Hate").

Bloody scenes

"Gothika" is his first English-language film, and though it may not have as much substance as his earlier works, he certainly makes up for it in style. The film, with its subdued coloring, bloody scenes, and an overpowering score by John Ottman, is highly stylized, as the title itself hints, in the manner of the popular Gothic novels of the 19th century.

Like those so-called horrid novels, which were condemned by such critics as Jane Austen, "Gothika" is overwrought, lurid, and, when you think about it, doesn't make a lot of sense.

Yes, we are aware of its shortcomings, but it is these very faults that make this movie enjoyable to watch.

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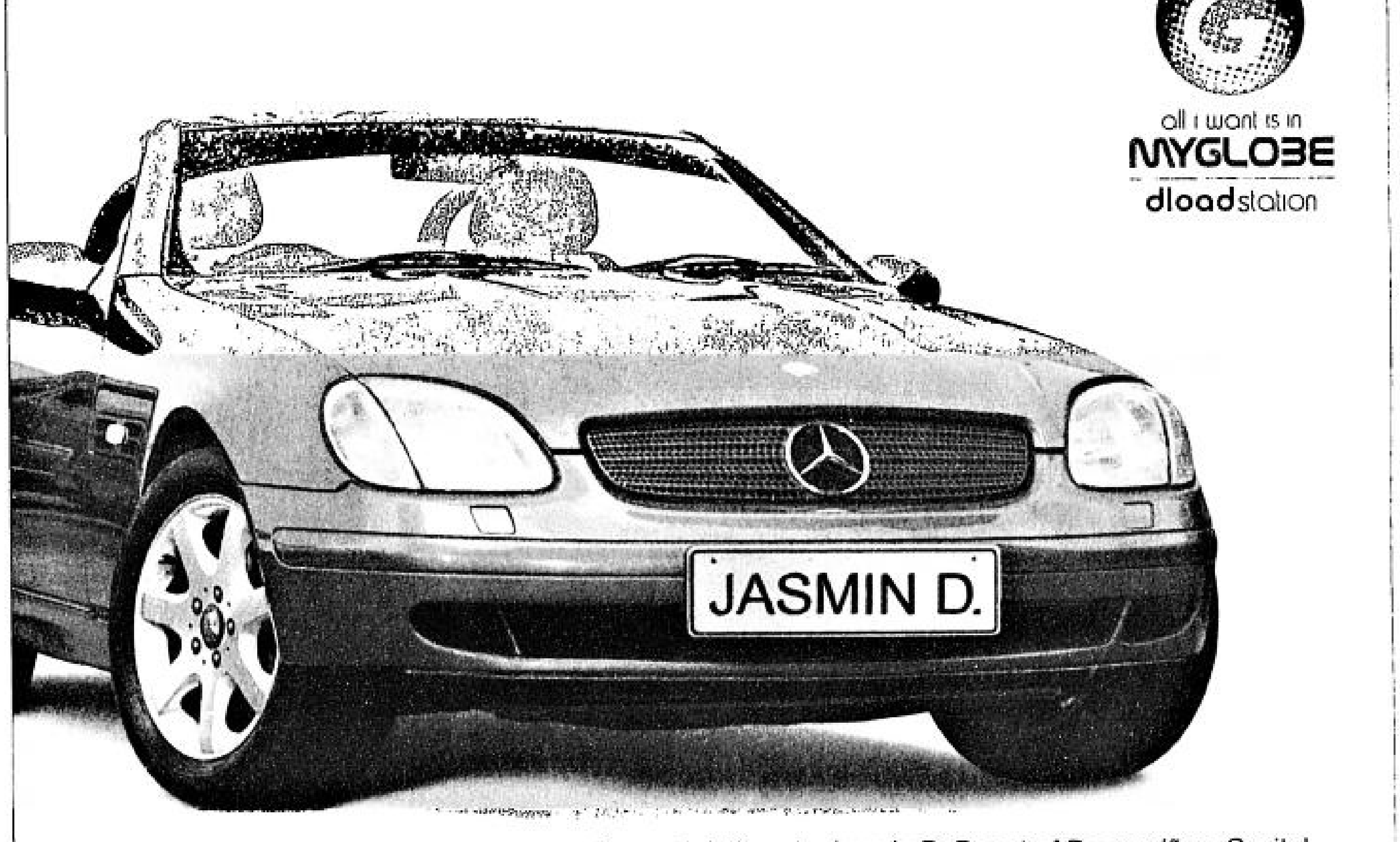

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Endless Love 2 Theme	Endless Love 2	endlesslove2
Happy	Alexia	f4happy
If You Come To Me	Atomic Kitten	ifucome2me
My Immortal	Evanescence	myimmortal
Breaking Us in Two	Mandy Moore	breakinusin2
Toxic	Britney Spears	toxic
Hey Yah	Outkast	heyyah
Baby I Love You	Jennifer Lopez	babyiloveyou
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Fallen	Lauren Wood	fallen
Till They Take My Heart Away	Clair Marlow	tildeytake
All My Life	America	allmylife
Love Is All That Matters	Eric Carmen	loveisall
Get Here	Oleta Adams	gethere
More Than Words	Extreme	moredanwords
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Steve Martin, Drew Barrymore in new starrers

By Nestor U. Torre

FIFTY-FOUR years ago, the comedy film "Cheaper By The Dozen" scored a direct hit on moviegoers, delighting them with its charming, turn-of-the-century story about the 12 Gilbreth kids, their strict father (Clifton Webb) and their loving and patient mother (Myrna Loy).

Story

Flashforward more than half a century later, and the story hasn't lost its warm, entertaining appeal—as its new version, now starring Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt, winningly attests.

This time around, the "over-extended" family is surnamed Baker, Dad is a smalltown college football coach, and Mom has written her memoirs. Her agent whisks her away to the big city to promote the book, leaving her husband alone to handle his rambunctious progeny!

Beyond the chaos and laughter, the new "Cheaper By the Dozen" is about family, loyalty and the important priorities in life. It's also a tribute to parents—especially mothers.

Hunt's exuberant performance underscores what makes the film family's mother tick, with hearty servings of love, patience—and an unsinkable sense of humor!

MARTIN. Plays a dad left alone to handle his rambunctious progeny.

BARRYMORE. Cast as a woman who suffers from short-term memory loss.

After playing Aragorn in "The Return of the King," Viggo Mortensen essays another heroic role in the epic action-adventure saga, "Hidalgo." He is cast as a legendary cowboy fallen on hard times. The glory days for him and his beloved horse, a mustang named Hidalgo, are long gone.

Survival race

But he and his horse are reenergized when he becomes the first American invited to enter the Ocean of Fire, a grueling 3,000-mile survival race across the punishing terrain of the Arabian Desert.

With competitors from different countries aiming for victory at all cost, the race becomes not only a matter of pride and honor, but also a fight for survival.

Compared to the other contestants' Arabian steeds, Hidalgo looks like a little pony. But the horse and its master summon up amazing reserves of courage and tenacity that impress their better-equipped competitors.

In "50 First Dates," Drew Barrymore plays an unusual character, a woman who suffers from short-term memory loss. Ben Stiller's character falls madly in love with her, but since she can't remember meeting him, he has to date her every single day, hoping that she will eventually fall for him!

The romantic comedy movie with this unique twist also stars Rob Schneider, Sean Astin and Dan Aykroyd.

Finally, in "Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed," the Mystery Inc. gang of Freddie Prinze Jr., Sarah Michelle Gellar and Matthew Lillard returns for more ghost-busting action, along with Alicia Silverstone and Seth Green.

Masked villain

In this sequel, Scooby and the gang lose their cool when an anonymous masked villain wreaks mayhem on the city of Coolsville. His secret weapon is a monster machine that recreates classic Mystery Inc. foes like the Pterodactyl Ghost, The Black Night and the 10,000-Volt Ghost.

Malapit na kayong balutan ng ...

Nginiiig!

Tunghayan ang drama sa likod ng mga kaluluwang nagpaparamdam
mula sa mata ng kanilang mga naiwan.

Kasama si *Raymond Bagatsing* at ang limang psychics ...
Nagtungo sa Liloan, Leyte upang alamin ang mga kababalaghang nagaganap doon makaraan ang trahedya noong Disyembre 2003.

Nginiig! Sasaklolo sa mga nananawagan upang bigyang kasagutan
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WillieNep is at his best impersonating presidents

By Amadis Ma. Guerrero

THE SCENE was an anti-government rally in the early 1970s. The man onstage looked, sounded and acted just like then-President Marcos— but he was saying the most outrageous things!

Laughter

The crowd of activists shook with laughter. And that was how the impersonator, Willie Nepomuceno, first made a name for himself.

Then came martial law, and for a while, nothing more was heard from "WillieNep." But you can't put a good (funny) man down, especially if he is master of his craft and art.

NEPOMUCENO. Master of his craft and art.

With a wig, make-up, the appropriate attire, some research, and vocal inflections, Nepomuceno can impersonate just about anybody. But he's at his best when he impersonates presidents.

WillieNep first impersonated former President Estrada when the latter was mayor of San Juan and Estrada didn't like it.

Nepomuceno explained that it was all in the spirit of fun, political satire, etc. But Estrada was reportedly not mollified, and only became friendly again when he was Vice President. Former Pres. Ramos, on the other hand, was a good sport. He enjoyed impersonations at his expense, and sometimes would even come up with his own funny reparteé.

Campaign season

These days, with the campaign season upon us, WillieNep is concentrating his satiric fire on the presidential candidates. His most recent show, at the Music Museum, was top-billed "Willie Nepomuceno for President."

Nepomuceno recreated his Erap act, with the detained ex-president this time as a guest on Kris Aquino's "Game Ka Na Ba," and having difficulty answering easy questions like "When is the Independence Day of the Philippines?" Also resurrected was "FVR," earnestly exhorting the electorate to vote wisely, disclaiming partisanship while keeping a photo of Ate Glo behind him.

The lampoon on Raul Roco was a riot. WillieNep had him down pat: A red, florid and floral polo shirt, campaign smile, Bicolano drawl, and easygoing manner marked by sudden flashes of temper ("I'm sorry for my outburst...").

Petrified

As for "Ping Lacson," he stood petrified before interviewer Kaye Dacer. Her real or professional name is Dacer, get it? Questioned about peace and order, "Lacson" declared that "*dahil sa* order *ko*, the criminals are at peace..."

On the video screen, the interviewer, zestfully played by Jon Santos, opens "Ping's" closet only to discover a lot of gowns, plus a skeleton that strangled her!

Even frustrated presidential wanna-be Gregorio Honasan received his share of slings and arrows. Egged on by interviewer Dacer, "Gringo" expounded on his program for national recovery: Kapatiran. Unity. Development and Economic Turn-Around. The first letters of each word spell K.U.D.E.T.A.

The latest creation of Nepomuceno, "Fernando Poe, Jr.," declared, "I am a natural-born Filipino. *Hindi po ako* caesarian..." And Malacañang is nothing but a palace, and "a palace needs a King!"

The show ended with a short documentary on the state of our nation, with its political and social turmoil, poverty, etc. After gales of laughter came a moment of reflection. That's vintage Willie Nepomuceno!

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Del Mundo's documentary to be screened in Singapore

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

"MAID in Singapore," Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr.'s latest documentary, will be screened at De La Salle University on March 8, Monday, 1 p.m. The 50-minute documentary that was shot on mini-DV focuses on three domestic helpers —Myla Mejia, a new overseas worker who wins the title of "She's My Girl," a beauty contest sponsored by Pinoy Star, a Singapore-based magazine; Victoria Abril, a domestic helper who works for a British expatriate; and Natividad Diaz who, after over 17 years in Singapore, is still looking for her good fortune.

"Maid in Singapore" also features a *balagtasan* between poets Teo Antonio and Michael Coroza, who argue the issue of sending Filipino women overseas. Another highlight is the award-winning poem by Dennis Torrecampo, "Dahil Kailangan," that is read by the three domestic helpers.

Del Mundo's documentary will be shown during the Singapore International Film Festival in April. For more information about the special screening on March 8, call 524-4611 (local 322) and ask for Agnes Rabina.

TEN monthly winners all set for grand finals of GMA-7's "Search for A Star" on March 13.

Films on women

The Hallmark Channel's movies for March (at 9 p.m.) honor and highlight women's stories that move, inform and inspire:

March 11, "Mystery Woman" is about as a whodunit buff who gets involved in a real-life puzzler involving blackmail, death and disturbing family secrets. With Kellie Martin and Robert Wagner.

March 18: "Defending Our Kids: The Julie Posey Story." Posey, a mother, courageously takes action against sexual predators preying on children on the Internet. Annie Potts co-stars with Michael O'Keefe.

March 25, "The Mystery of Natalie Wood, Part 1." A popular star, Wood appeared to live a charmed life. But, away from the kleig lights, she was besieged by many tempests, culminating in her baffling death by drowning. Part 2 screens on March 26.

March 27, "Out of Order." A seemingly perfect marriage cracks under the pressure of infidelity, drugs and self-destructive tendencies. With Eric Stoltz, Justine Bateman and William H. Macy.

Movies on TV

On HBO, March 6 at 6:30 a.m., "The Little Unicorn." March 7 at 7:30 a.m., "The Gathering Storm." March 8 at 11 a.m., "Save the Last Dance." March 9 at 2 p.m., "Road to Redemption." March 10 at 9 p.m., "Casino." March 11 at 12:45 p.m., "Primal Fear." March 12 at 9:15 a.m., "The Browning Version."

On Cinemax, March 6 at 10:45 p.m., "The Godfather." March 7 at 5:30 p.m., "The Fabulous Baker Boys." March 8 at 3:45 p.m., "The Milagro Beanfield War." March 9 at 5:30 p.m., "Rear Window." March 10 at 9 p.m., "The Eiger Sanction." March 11 at 2 p.m., "A Man for All Seasons." March 12 at 3:45 p.m., "Splendor in the Grass."

Vote for 'Star' finalists

The grand finals of GMA-7's "Search for A Star" singing tilt will be held at the ULTRA at 9 p.m. on March 13. Competing are talented monthly finalists Tina Braganza, Jerianne Mae Templo, Iris Malazarte, Sarah Jean Badana, Romelo Valena, Cherryl Ubasa, Maria Camille Relevo, Raymond Manalo, Genevieve Villabroza and Rachelle Ann Go.

Viewers can vote for their favorite grand finalist by downloading his or her logo or picture message. Text in STAR><name of finalist><name and address of voter>. Send entries to 2364 for Globe and Touch Mobile and 4627 for Smart and Talk N' Text.

Focusing on the bigger picture

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

WHAT is our natural reaction to seeing someone suffer? Generally, we feel pain and sadness. We do not relish the sight of a suffering person.

Burden

The laws of spiritual love dictate that we wish to see our loved ones happy, and we are greatly saddened when they are in pain. We grieve when they suffer and we wish that we could take on their burden of pain. We smile when we remember our happy moments with them, and we shed tears when we think about their pain and suffering.

Yet, in this day and age of violent movies, we are conditioned to accept brutality and torture as entertainment. We are served unpalatable varieties of barbaric and perverted sequences of sadism, masochism and unimaginable violent activities that have rendered us numb, or sometimes unnaturally excited.

Torture

"The Passion of the Christ" is a movie centered on the torture and brutality inflicted on the compassionate and loving Jesus Christ. It is vivid and direct in visually presenting step-by-step all the gruesome and painful acts he experienced before death.

As a devotee of Jesus Christ, will my heart stand seeing such suffering? If my husband is murdered by criminals, will I want my child to see how his father was brutally killed? Certainly not. The vision of suffering and pain of a loved one is not to be relished. Does Jesus Christ want me to remember him this way?

The laws of spiritual love are simple and clear: A father does not want his son to see his bleeding wounds and meditate on them. A loving father wants his son to remember his teachings and live by them.

Teachings

Jesus does not feel happiness if we focus on his suffering. Instead, he wants us to meditate on his words and teachings. This is real glorification and praise of Jesus Christ and the Supreme Lord.

Relatives and loved ones of great personalities dwell and focus on the mission of the departed leader. The leader will always draw attention to his cause and never to himself. He will always show the bigger picture and the higher meaning of his every act. And his true followers will always see his vision and focus on it.

Email lotuspond108@hotmail.com

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UTT, UTT AND AWAY!

24 HOURS with VJ Utt in Singapore
Nice Utt

By Tim Yap

THERE'S just something about Greg Uttsada Panichkul, better known to MTV viewers as VJ Utt, that makes girls everywhere swoon.

Of course you see him goofing around with Donita, and now with Denise as he introduces your favorite videos. Or you've probably seen his face in ads that invite you to step into a store and purchase its latest threads.

This guy is all over Asia—as an actor in his native Thailand, a veejay based in Singapore, and a model in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the region. Oh, and he's now in Manila to "explore new territory."

"He will be the new F4," his Manila manager, Joyce Ramirez Antonio, proudly proclaims. She doesn't mean he'll be starring in some foreign language *telenovela* (although he has a couple to his credit, in Thai). What she meant was, Utt would take Manila by storm, generating endless shrieks from female fans who would surely be wowed by that bedimpled boyish smile and lanky bod.

I met Utt through his fellow VJ Belinda Panelo a year ago at the MTV Asia Awards after-party. "He's so nice," Belinda whispered to me. Sarah and Donita had the best things to say about him, too. So what is it about Utt?

Doctor to surfer to VJ

A brief history check reveals that Utt has been VJ-ing for MTV for five years now. He was discovered in a local search at Bangkok's Hard Rock Cafe. He grew up in the sunny shores of California, but his mother sent him back to Thailand to discover his Asian roots.

As a kid, Utt dreamed of becoming ... well, everything, from a doctor to a surfer dude. He was the quiet one in the family, especially when compared to his hyperactive brother Gerald.

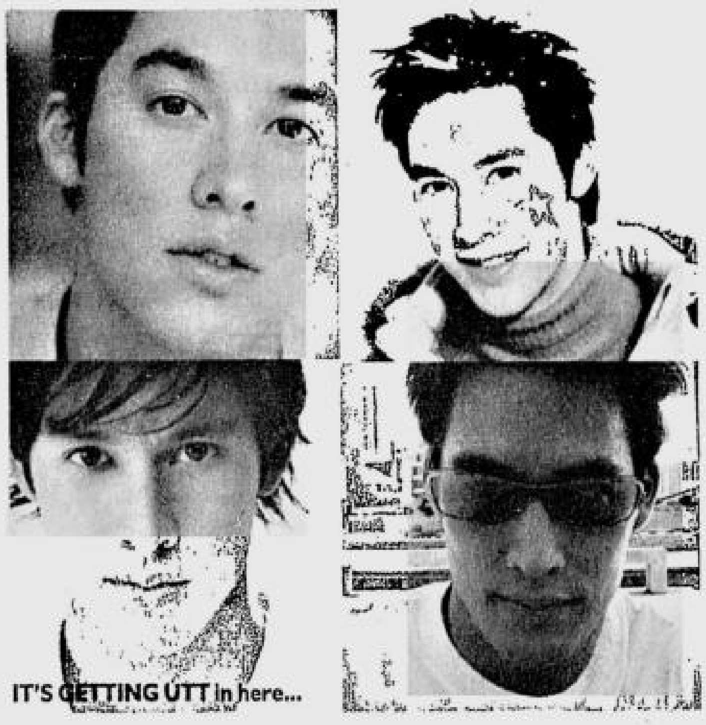
He tried out modelling just to buy a return ticket. Instead, he was swamped with acting offers, till the bug bit. From there, he ventured into soap operas, made a few movies down the line, landed his job at MTV, and made more than just a few heads turn. He doesn't exactly fit the heartthrob jock stereotype. He has this cool and casual air about him. He's sort of like one of us, only he looks better.

He laughs a lot, loves to eat and is not afraid to show it. At the Fullerton hotel lobby in Singapore where we meet up for some tea, he excitedly orders sweets and digs into his chocolate cake with gusto. Fans walk up, and he gamely signs autographs for them.

Come and join us

"Some of the fans even checked into the hotel, just to see him," says his Singapore manager Mel Lam. His Manila, Singapore

24 HOURS/ E2


IT'S GETTING UTT in here...

This guy is all over Asia—as an actor in his native Thailand, a veejay based in Singapore, a model in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the region. Oh, and he's now in Manila to 'explore new territory.'

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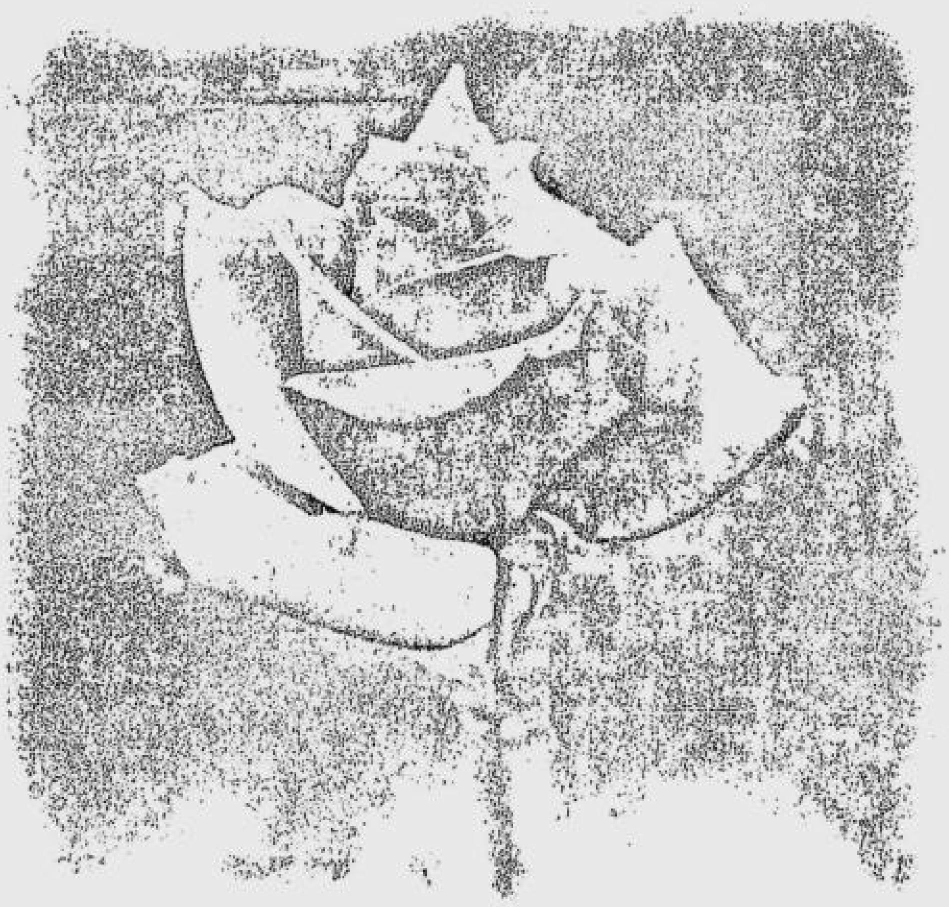
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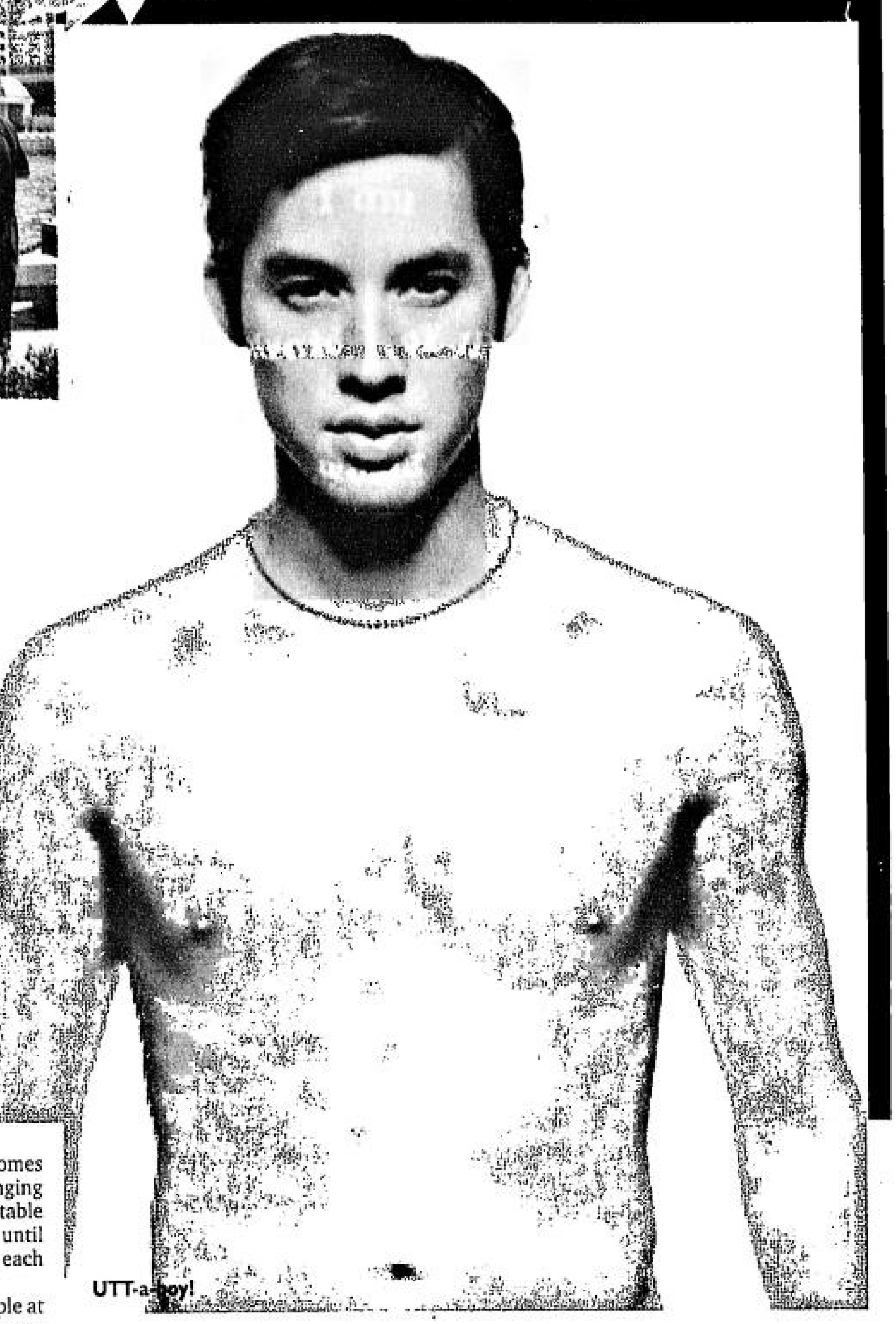
IT'S A wrap

SHOOTING for MTV

24 HOURS with VJ Utt in Singapore

Nice Utt


UTT-a-boy!

From page E1

and Bangkok managers are having a fun bonding session with their beloved star. All throughout the interview, he answers questions astutely, then goes on to playful outbursts.

Pinay uber mannequin Joey Mead, in Singapore briefly for modelling stints, joins the group to meet up with me, but becomes speechless upon realizing that we are hanging out with Utt. He makes her feel comfortable by asking questions and trading jokes, until we are all goofing around and taking each other's pictures.

Utt has that special gift of making people at ease just by being at ease himself. He loves to invite people: "Come over and join us!"

He is a whole lot of fun to be with, although he is not exactly a party person—he leaves all gatherings early (of course, I know this because I leave much later). "I have to be up early tomorrow," he would say matter-of-factly, making it sound like he is off to school, not work.

In another interview, he deconstructs the stereotype that all VJs are way too cool: "I'm a totally uncool VJ. I burp really loud, I am a sloppy eater, you'll always see food off my plate. You know how, when you meet a girl for the first time, you want to give her a good impression? I give the worst impression. That's not the end of it, I'm clumsy and trip over things constantly. I don't go out to impress people. I just try to be myself."

This still doesn't explain why he is utt-erly irresistible. And if the photos on this page don't help, I don't know what will.

*(***VJ Utt had a party with the Super! staff last night and will attend the MTV Grind bar tour which happens tonight at Spirits Coyote Bar in Malate.)*

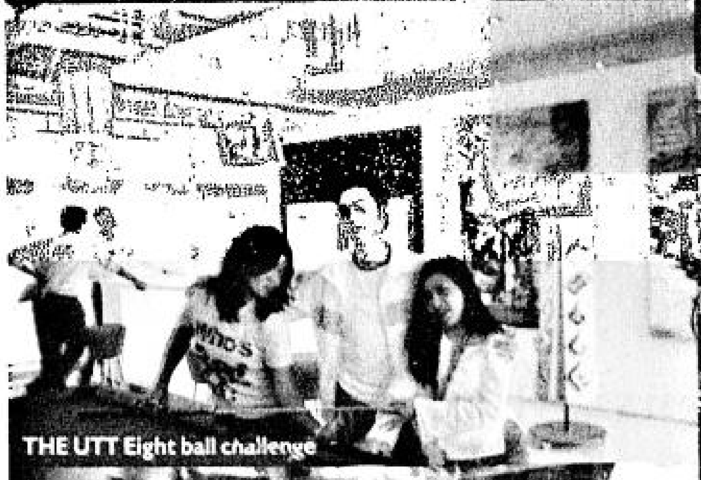
***For advertising, modeling, hosting and other inquiries, MTV Vj Utt is represented in the Philippines by his manager Joyce Antonio Ramirez (email at mary@uttsada.com or call 0917-7957900)

LOGOMANIA

UTT'S angels

"WHY don't you shop around, with a friend?"

BREAKING some rules in Singapore


THE UTT Eight ball challenge

WITH MTV vj Denise

MTV Whatever

HANGING loose

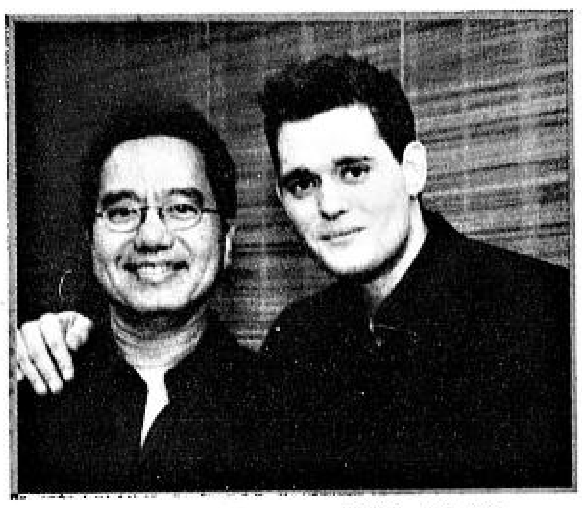
YUP, his car is branded, too

FLIPPING out

WITH Thai buddies

With Manila manager Joyce Ramirez

CLOSING time



INFINITE JIVE. Francis Lumen and Michael Bublé

JOEY'S RHYTHM. Carlo and Antoinette Ocampo with Junie Licaros

FLUTE PLAY. Mrten Bremelhoej and Christine San Diego

ORIGINAL JOEY. Rebecca Disini and RJ Ledesma

SMART STYLE. Vickie Perez De Tagle and Celine Lopez

24/7 to 92.3. Janine Dario and Leah De Guzman

JAMMING with acoustic prince Paolo Santos

'Gimme five!'

WINE bottles heralded the event weeks before, with the cryptic message that a big celebration was forthcoming. And a big celebration it was that happened at the NBC Tent last month when Joey 92.3 pulled out all the stops for a fabulous fifth anniversary celebration that was certainly for the books.

"Joey Jives at Five" had Manila's premiere party people winin', dinin' and jivin' to the music of Paolo Santos, Bituin Escalante, Cooky Chua, Guarana, The CompanY, and Canadian swing sensation Michael Bublé—who left the crowd howling for more after belting out a set of big band classics and a smattering of respectable rap.

The Vancouver charmer also received a dainty gift from Joey that night—a mounted vintage microphone handed by NBC CEO Francis Lumen—a token for topping Joey's listeners' requests consistently since his big Manila debut last year.

Well-wishers clad in their business best feasted on fancy edibles and toasted on sparkling wine to five years of lifestyle radio. Can there be a grander way to blow out one's birthday candles? Nay!

SHINING with Bituin Escalante

TATLER DUO. Randy and Irene Francisco

SHU UP. Joey original Tina Tinio with Heidi Ng

STEPPING UP. Anne Arcenas and Freddy Gonzales

MTV INKED. Chris Lopez and Ricky Delgado

92.3K. Al and Angela Panlilio

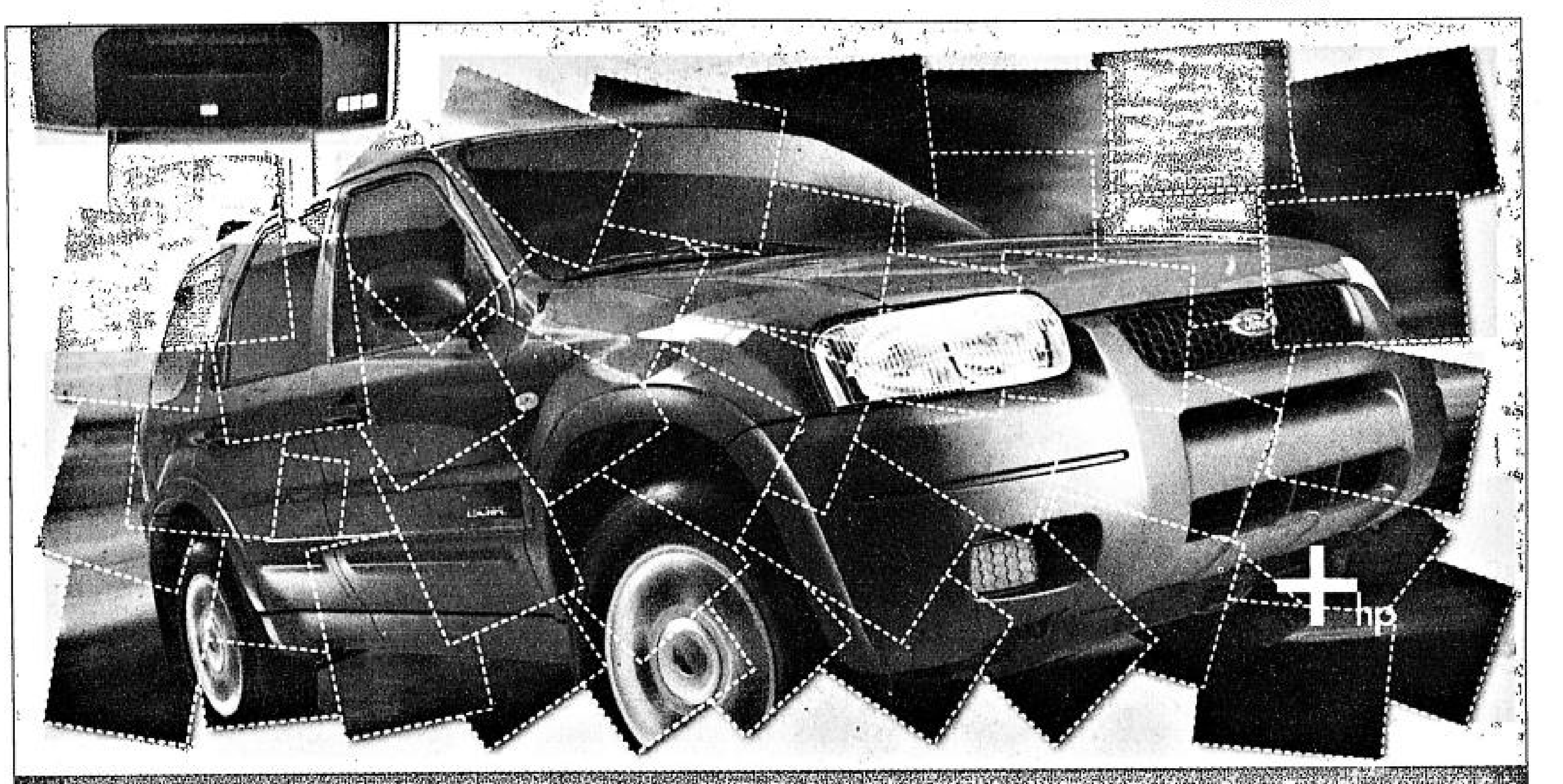
MUSICAL BONDING. Ipe and Ching Cruz

FAB FIVE. Ria Romero

You Are Invited!

THIS coming Tuesday, March 9, prepare yourself for a super fun Slumber Party At The Playgirl Mansion. P99 Flavored Martinis will be served chilled by hot celebrity male models. Bring or wear your sexiest lingerie to win prizes like overnight accommodations or a dinner date with a surprise international celebrity hunk. Open bar for ladies starts at 9 p.m.

This event is the first of the Fatally Femme Tuesdays @ Azurro (Somerset Millenium Hotel, 104 Aguirre St. Legaspi Village, Makati) and is brought to you by Amanda Griffin, Bianca Zobel, Karen Grupp and Tina Pamintuan.



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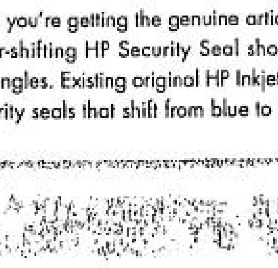

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hp invent

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0159, Series of 2004.

Get Real!
HP gives you a chance to win a brand new Ford Escape.

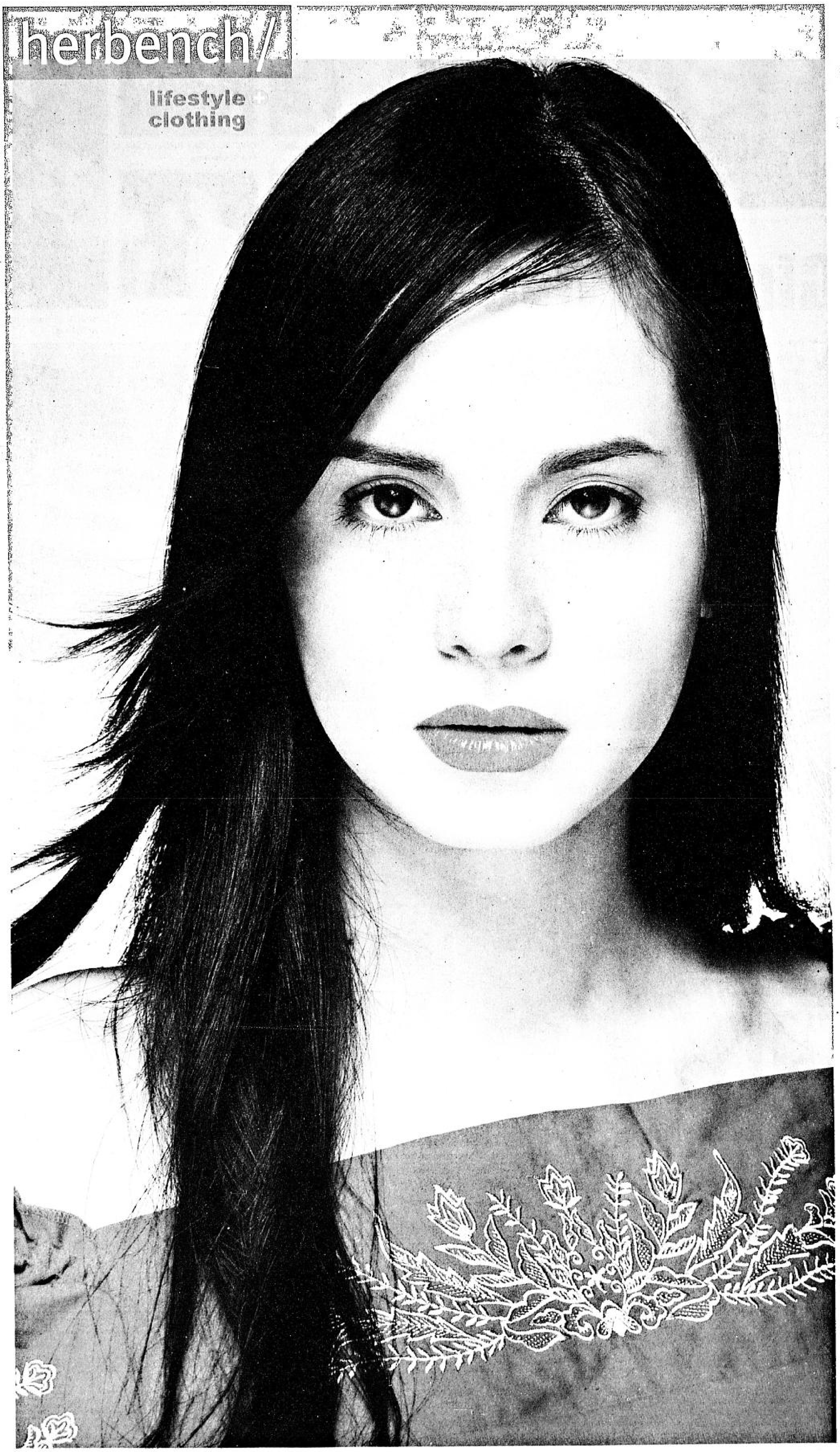
GET REAL RAFFLE MECHANICS

1. Every purchase of any participating original HP inkjet cartridge entitles a customer to join the raffle promo.
   Singles:
   51629AA (HP29) 51645AA (HP45)
   C1823DA (HP23) C6578DA (HP78)
   C6614DA (HP20) C6615DA (HP15),
   51649AA (HP49)
   TWIN PACKS with FREE SODA BAG
   Y1979AA (C6615D) Y1958AA (C6614D)
   Y1980AA (51629D) Y1981AA (51645A)
2. Only original HP ink cartridges, with raffle stickers, purchased from February 15 to May 15, 2004 are qualified to join the promotion.
3. Only original inks purchased in participating resellers are qualified entries in this promotion. Consumer may call the HP hotline at 867-3557 or 1800-1331-4488 to check on the list of participating resellers.
4. The entire box of participating inkjet cartridges will serve as entry. Customers must fill out the raffle coupon, on the sticker attached to the box, with the ff. information:
   Name, Address, Printer model, E-mail address, Tel.no/mobile no., Name of school or company, Name of computer store, Sales Invoice/Official Receipt, Date purchased, Signature (For corporate entries, company name should be written as the entry name and should be signed by an authorized representative).
5. Drop entries in any of HP's GET REAL Raffle Promo drop boxes located in selected HP dealers in GMA/Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. All drop boxes will be labeled per area.
6. A total of 5 draws will be held - - 2 preliminary draws each for the Visayas/Mindanao and GMA/Luzon area, and 1 Grand Draw. All non-winning entries during the preliminary draws will automatically be included in the Grand Draw.
7. Promo period is from Feb 15 to May 15, 2004.

Draw Date	Area	Deadline for submission of entries	Prizes per area
1st Draw March 19, 2004	GMA/LUZON and VIS/MIN	March 15, 2004 (store close)	(7) Nike GCs worth PhP 2,500.00 (1) Rudy Project Kerosene Shades (1) Nokia 3200 (1) Home Entertainment System from Sony (DAV-SA30, TV-BT21N40)
2nd Draw April 21, 2004	GMA/LUZON and VIS/MIN	April 15, 2004 (store close)	(7) Creative LX200 MP3 Player (2) HP IPAQ h2210 Pocket PC (1) Sony Ericsson P900
Grand Draw May 28, 2004	Nationwide	May 15, 2004 (store close)	(10) HP IPAQ h1930 Pocket PC, (1) 2003 Ford Escape (XLS, 4X2 M/T)

A participant can only win once per raffle draw, if a participant's name gets drawn more than once, he/she gets the bigger prize. Winners will be notified via registered mail and telephone. Names of winners shall be published in a national daily newspaper. HP will shoulder 20% withholding tax for prizes exceeding P10,000.00. To claim the prize, winners must present at least one (1) valid ID (driver's license, company ID, valid passport, etc.) as well as the registered mail notification. Prizes may be claimed at Publicis Dialog Office - 10/F IBM Plaza Bldg. Eastwood City Bagumbayan, Libis, Quezon City from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Mondays to Fridays only. Look for Ms. Violeta Vallejo. Provincial winners can claim their prizes at the nearest office specified on the registered mail or sent through courier. In case the winner is a company, the prize will be awarded to the company through the authorized representative who signed the raffle entry, upon presentation of an authorization letter from the company. Prizes not claimed within sixty (60) days from receipt of notification shall be forfeited in favor of HEWLETT-PACKARD Philippines, Corp. with prior approval from DTI. The winner will shoulder pertinent registration and other expense concerning the prize vehicle. All employees of Hewlett-Packard Philippines Corp., distributors, dealers, resellers, it's advertising and promotions agencies and their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity or affinity are not qualified to join. HP reserves the right to certify if the winning entries are legitimate. HP's decision in concurrence with DTI rules and regulation, regarding HP's Get Real raffle promotion will be deemed final and non-negotiable.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0159, Series of 2004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TINA PAMINTUAN
Chef, writer and model

"The thing about being a woman is....finding the balance of being strong and loving at the same time. Being meek but still holding your head up high with a smile from within."

Gown by Jojie Lloren

Gown by Rajo Laurel

LEICA CARPO
Public Relations Manager

"The thing about being a woman is that its often sexier and more fun than being a man."

CAT JUAN
Model and writer

"The thing about my family is...all the women are strong, beautiful, and
independent. They are my inspiration on how to live life."

Gown by Rem Divino

Who is she?

Texts by Tals Diaz
Photos By Paolo Pineda
Make up by Xeng Zulueta of Shu Uemura
Graphics Design by Alden Cedo

SHE is goddess, sister, lover, wife, queen and mother.

She is like water, gentle yet strong. In the face of adversity, she exhibits fearlessness and grace. She is armed by the power of ideas and cloaked with a beauty that disarms.

We are held breathless with what we see of her. Not merely with what our eyes behold, but with what we discover when we dare go beyond appearances. She tells a story of her triumphs in spite of a long, severe history that once doubted her ability to change the world.

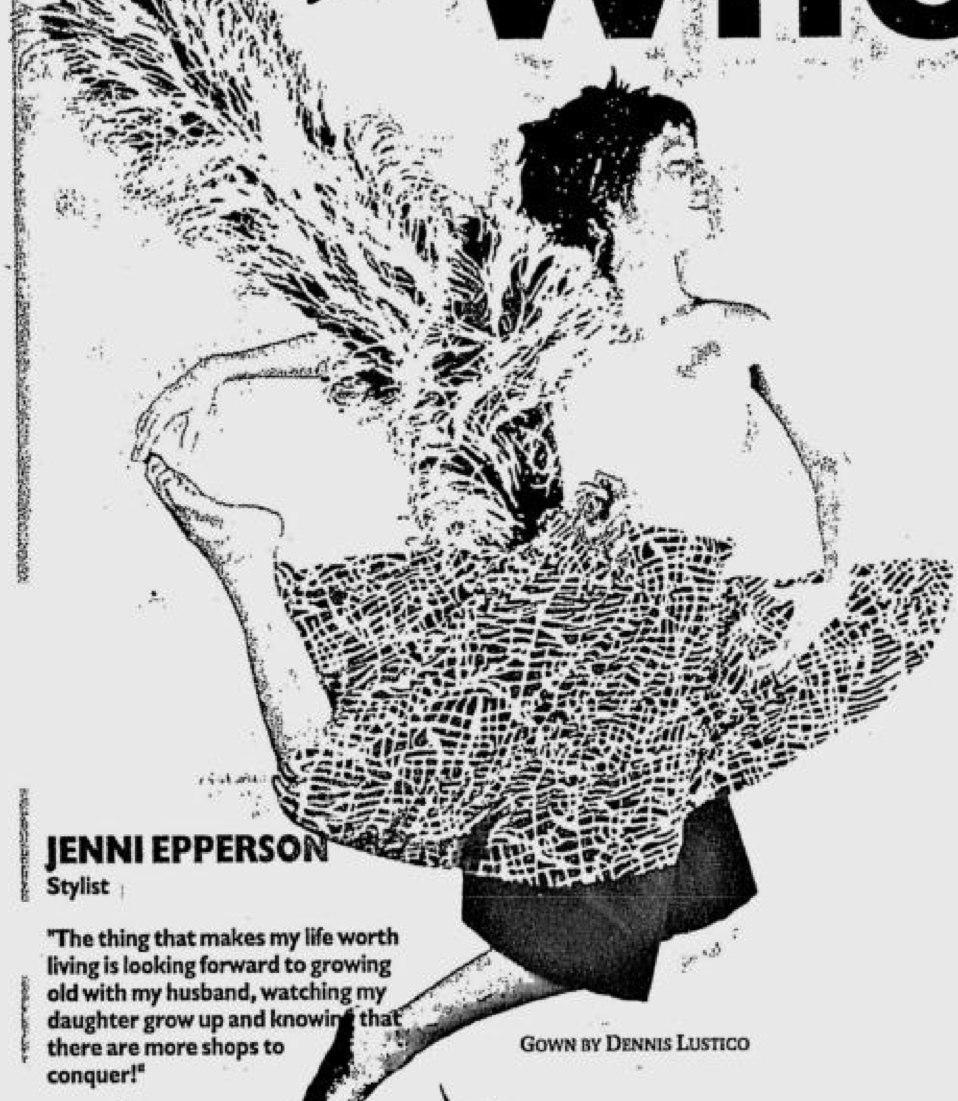
We call upon her as our muse in the infinite struggle to respond to our passions. She is every word in a poem, the deep pause before a hymn, the reason for tracing constellations in the universe.

She inspires. Invigorated herself by the beliefs and actions of those before her, she knows that she is a light in the world today, a light that shines upon those who seek solace within her temple.

She moves the world.

She is Woman.

Globe Handyphone understands her like no other and pays tribute to her on International Women's Day with its promos, download offerings and the new, fully-consumable G-Flex Plans that empower her with the mobility and freedom to fly through life with her characteristic grace and indeed, make great things possible!



JENNI EPPERSON
Stylist

"The thing that makes my life worth living is looking forward to growing old with my husband, watching my daughter grow up and knowing that there are more shops to conquer!"

Gown by Dennis Lustico

ALEXANDRA ESCAT
Scholar of life

"The thing about being a woman is.... We are able to give life.... through sensuality, passion, love, and beauty."

Top by Rajo Laurel

ANNA PALABYAB
Medical student

"I love...God, my family, Raymond, my friends. The thing that makes me most angry is... abortion."

Gown by Tippi Ocampo

KRIS MIJARES
Business Analyst

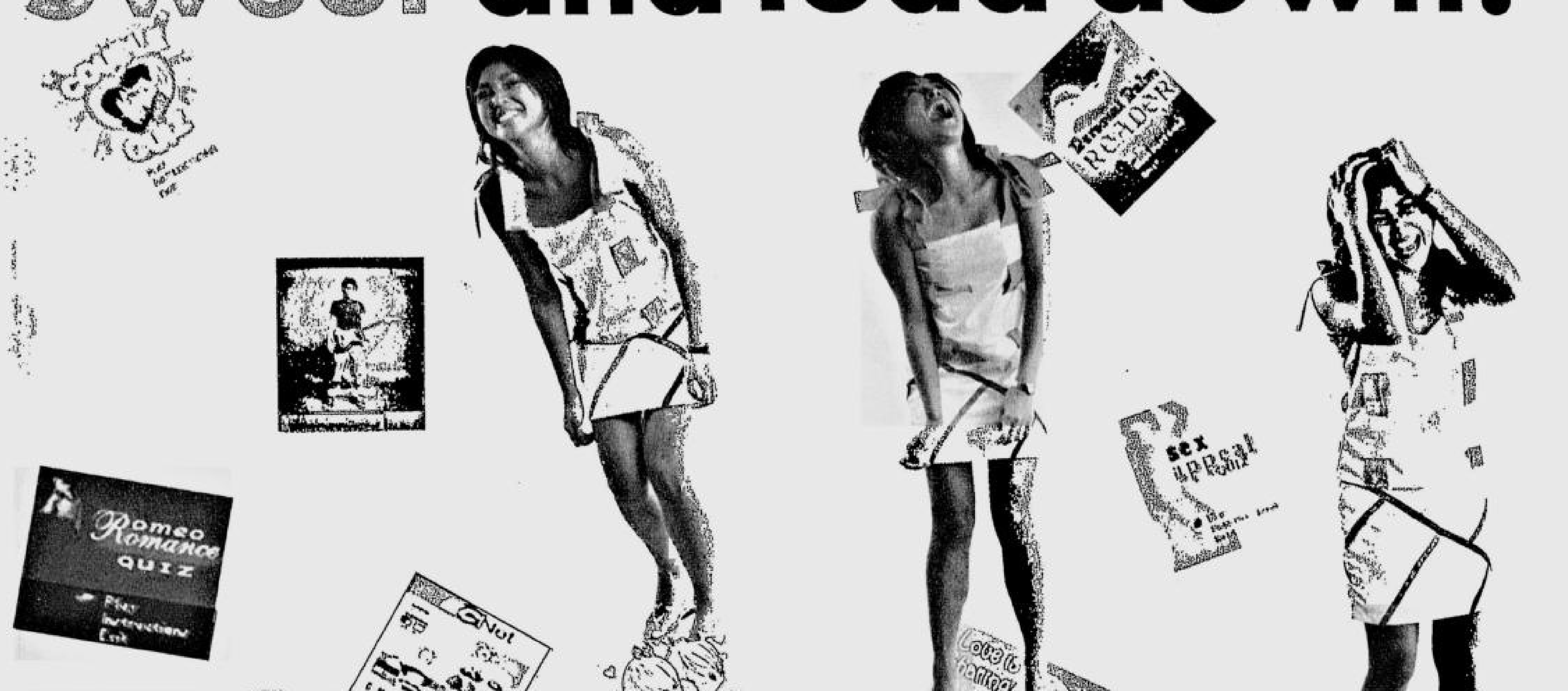
"The thing that makes my life worth living: God, "a once in a lifetime love" that only most can dream about, my family, friends and a special friend that fills my days with laughter."

PAZZY NAVARRO
Make up artist and bag designer

"My best outfit consisted of my big maternal belly. It has brought about
the best oohs and aahs and given me the most happiness more than any
fashion item has!"

Top by Kate Torralba

Sweet and load down!



"Your left hand is the sensible one.
Your right hand is the crazy one.
Your left hand does what it should.
Your right hand does what it pleases.
Your left hand will support you.
Your right hand will surprise you.
Women of the world, raise your right hand."

Pardon the blatant plagiarism from the "Diamonds are forever" campaign, but we just had to use these sparkling words for our fingers to do the walking, what with wallpapers, ringtones, polytones, games and greetings for us to download.

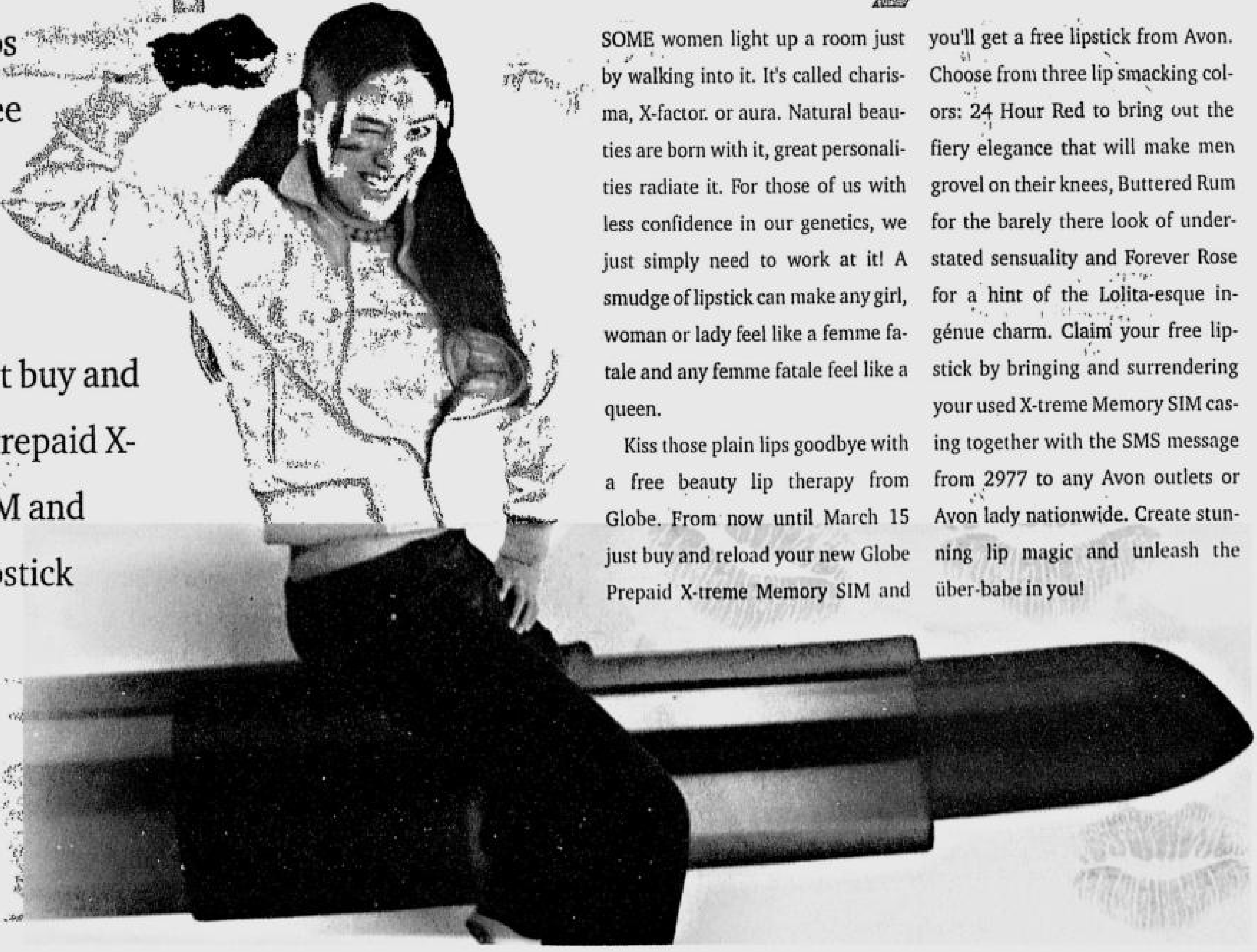
myGlobe's very revealing HandyQuizzes and Personal Genie will let every incurable romantic's heart flit and flutter with delight. While Music Central's symphony of syrupy and sizzling tones will sonically enhance your stylish mobile ensemble. Cute HandyGames will bring out the gamester in every girl trendster. myGlobe's treasure trove of girlie delights will tickle every girl pink and make her sparkle and shine!

Also, just register on myGlobe and keep downloading or sending MMS greetings, Photo Messages and Video Messages to your friends for a chance to win exciting prizes like gift certificates weekly or a Nokia 6220 phone or free barkada trips in the grand draw.

Ladies, start downloading!

Lip, lip hooray!

Kiss those plain lips goodbye with a free beauty lip therapy from Globe. From now until March 15 just buy and reload your new Prepaid X-treme Memory SIM and you'll get a free lipstick from Avon.



SOME women light up a room just by walking into it. It's called charisma, X-factor. or aura. Natural beauties are born with it, great personalities radiate it. For those of us with less confidence in our genetics, we just simply need to work at it! A smudge of lipstick can make any girl, woman or lady feel like a femme fatale and any femme fatale feel like a queen.

Kiss those plain lips goodbye with a free beauty lip therapy from Globe. From now until March 15 just buy and reload your new Globe Prepaid X-treme Memory SIM and you'll get a free lipstick from Avon. Choose from three lip smacking colors: 24 Hour Red to bring out the fiery elegance that will make men grovel on their knees, Buttered Rum for the barely there look of understated sensuality and Forever Rose for a hint of the Lolita-esque ingénue charm. Claim your free lipstick by bringing and surrendering your used X-treme Memory SIM casing together with the SMS message from 2977 to any Avon outlets or Avon lady nationwide. Create stunning lip magic and unleash the über-babe in you!

before
makeover
after

Just buy a Globe Prepaid X-treme Memory SIM for only ₱200 and make your first reload!

also available
Individual Blue Cologne For Him

Promo period: Feb. 1 to March 31, 2004

1. Buy a Globe Prepaid X-treme Memory SIM for only ₱200 at any Globe Telecom Business Center or dealer nationwide. Promo not open to SIM Switch and Hi-Memory SIM.
2. Reload for as low as ₱50 within the promo period (Share-a-load not qualified*). You will receive a promo text from 2977 within 2 days.
3. Show the text and surrender your SIM casing at any Avon outlet or to your Avon Lady to claim your Globe AVON Kikay Kit with one (1) Avon Color Ultra Color Rich Renewable mini lipstick or one (1) 10mL bottle of Individual Blue Pocket Edition Cologne For Him.

The Avon representative will delete the text upon redemption. For help in claiming, you can also call the Avon Hotline at 1-800-888-2866.

4. Each person can only claim a maximum of five (5) items. Redeem from Feb. 1 to May 29, 2004 only.
5. Employees of Globe Telecom, Avon, Harrison Communications, Inc., and Globe dealers, including their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from the promo.

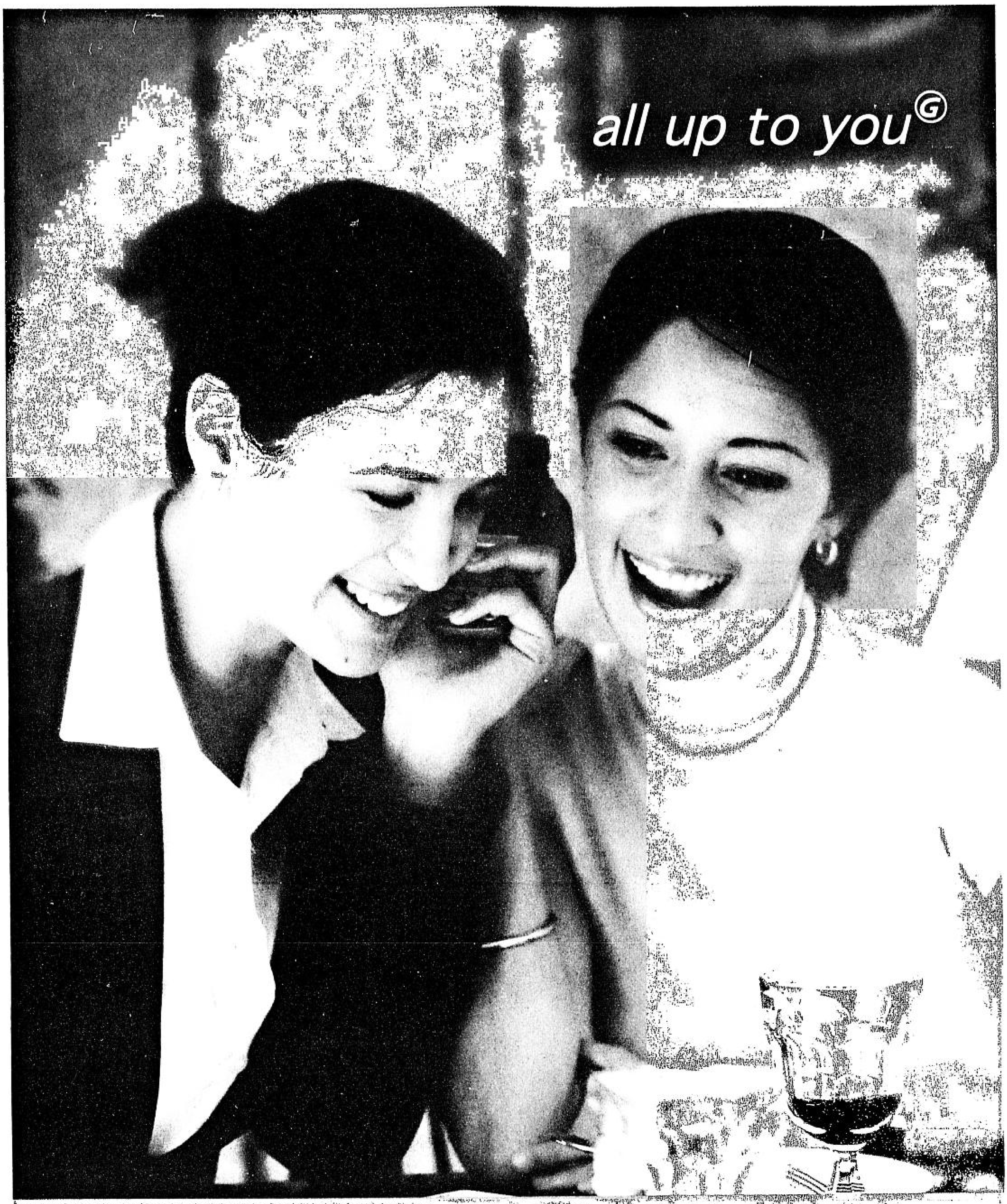
* Approved by DTI-NCR / Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0061, Series of 2004.

GLOBE AVON
kikaykit

FREE!
AVON color
LIPSTICK

Globe
HANDYPHONE
Prepaid
64k
X-treme
Memory

making great things possible for her Globe
HANDYPHONE



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Spend your monthly fee any way you want!

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	G FLEX 800	G FLEX 1,200	G FLEX 1,800	G FLEX 2,500	G FLEX 3,500	G FLEX 5,000
Monthly Fee	P800	P1,200	P1,800	P2,500	P3,500	P5,000
Consumable Amount	P800	P1,200	P1,800	P2,500	P3,500	P5,000
Free Text	200	250	300	350	400	400
Globe to Globe	P6.50	P6.00	P5.00	P4.50	P4.00	P4.00
Globe to non-Globe	P7.00	P6.50	P6.00	P5.50	P4.50	P4.50
IDD	$0.40 ANYTIME, ANYWHERE					
Text fee after free SMS	P1.00/msg	P0.50/msg	P0.50/msg	P0.50/msg	P0.50/msg	P0.50/msg

Rates are inclusive of VAT and Currency Exchange Rate Adjustment (CERA). [illegible] Call 730-1000 for inquiries.

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